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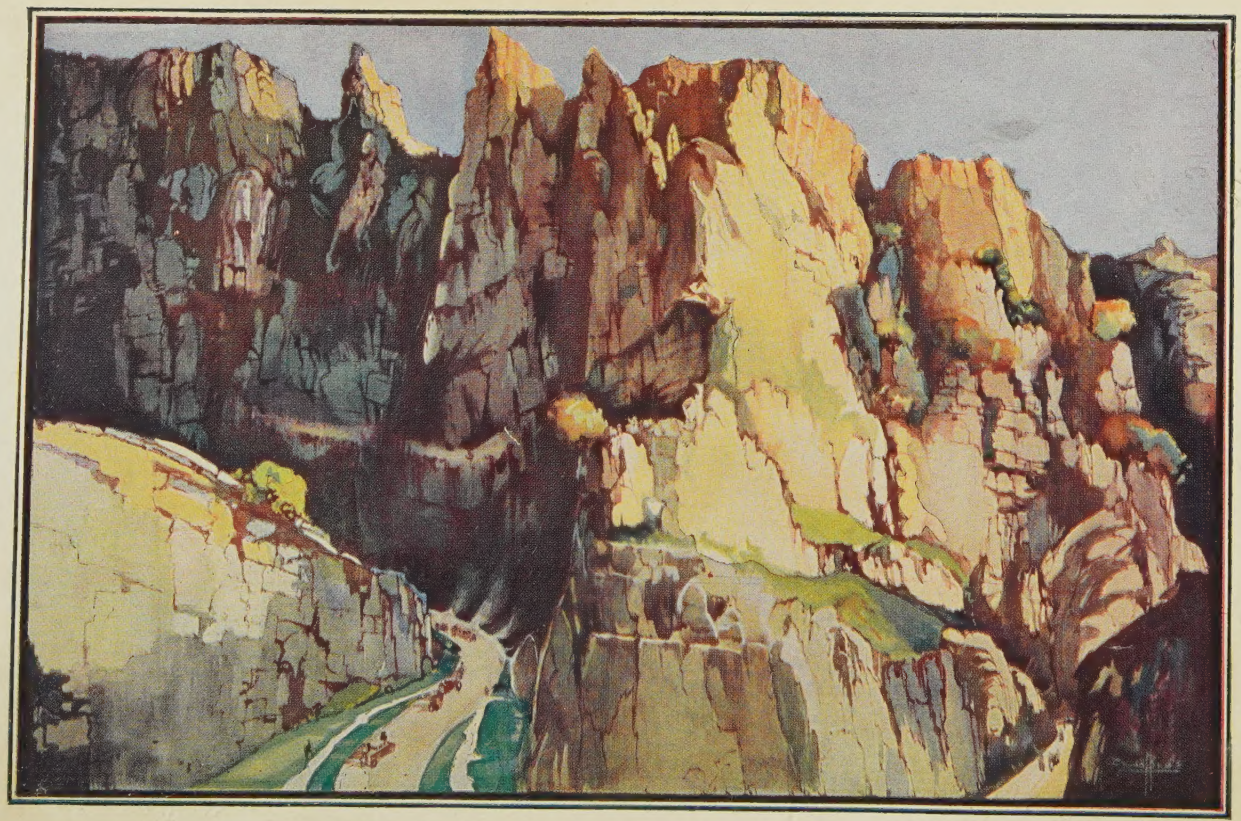

CHEDDAR GORGE.

942·38

SOMERSET

by

MAXWELL FRASER, F.R.G.S.

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

[James Milne, *General Manager*]

PADDINGTON STATION, LONDON, W.2

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FOREWORD

I have been asked to write a foreword to Maxwell Fraser's very charming book. I do not quite know why I should have been asked to do this, save, perhaps, for the fact that my ancestors had the good taste to settle in Somerset nearly 700 years ago, and my family has remained there ever since.

There is no doubt that the part of the country that Maxwell Fraser has written about has a certain and distinctive charm of its own—and although transport has brought it within the reach of all, it still retains much of its old-world flavour, customs and superstitions.

Maxwell Fraser describes the scenery delightfully, and there are very many historical and interesting facts to be found in this book, which make it a most valuable asset to anyone visiting Somerset.

I warmly commend it to all to read—to those who have already visited Somerset, and to those for whom that pleasure is yet in store.

GEOFFREY F. LUTTRELL,

Dunster Castle,

Somerset.

NUNNEY CASTLE.

From an original drawing found in a pocket M.S. volume carried by a royalist officer, who, coming to Nunney with the Royalist army on Friday, July 19th, 1644, visited the castle when it was perfect. The sketch is reproduced by permission of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society.

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The Ship Inn, Porlock.

Porlock Church.

THE WEST SOMERSET COAST

CHAPTER I

One of the greatest charms of the Somerset coast is the freedom of approach to the sea-shore. Particularly is this the case in West Somerset, where the few scattered towns and villages leave miles of coastline untouched. Even when the houses cluster in a popular resort or tiny hamlet, the right of way to the sea is preserved—a refreshing change from certain other stretches of coast line in England, where "development" schemes have been so ruthlessly carried out that it is frequently impossible to gain a glimpse of the sea for miles at a stretch.

Though reminiscent of the coast of Devon in the deep red colouring of its cliffs, the West Somerset coast has a charm and individuality of its own. There is a pleasant atmosphere of friendliness and peace, with a fascinating hint of antiquity in the submerged forests of West Quantoxhead, Porlock and Minehead, and the countless fossils to be found strewn along the beaches, which intensifies the radiant freshness of this unspoiled countryside. One popular family resort, a little seaport, one village, and two or three clusters of houses scarcely aspiring to the name of a village, make up the tale of West Somerset's coast resorts—but in these few places scattered along 16 miles of coast there is concentrated a variety of interest and beauty which captivates every visitor.

The most westerly of Somerset's delightful little holiday resorts is Porlock Weir, the most picturesque port in Somerset, set at the seaward end of the lovely Vale of Porlock. There are three Porlocks, Porlock Weir, which though a mere handful of houses, is a place to set the visitor dreaming ; the Porlock of the " Ship " Inn, beloved by Southey, which figures in " Lorna Doone," and is one of the most beautiful of the many lovely inland villages of Somerset ; and West Porlock, midway between the two—a cluster of houses and gardens which somehow achieves the atmosphere of quiet loveliness which seems the birthright of every village in this enchanting corner of West Somerset.

Porlock, whose old coach road to Lynton is famous for the steepness of Porlock Hill, is approached from Minehead by a hill which is scarcely less steep, and the village itself consists of a main street which rejoices the beauty-lover rather more than the motorist, for each house has been set down in some past age with every regard for the taste of the owner, and none at all for the line of the street. The result is an almost incredibly picturesque High Street, where whitewashed cottages bowered in roses and clematis stand at every conceivable angle to the street, in a prodigality of beauty. This charming, flowery vision has a very solid background of history, and has existed far longer than many towns, for it was founded by the Saxons and was in its early days an important port, with a Saxon palace which was doubtless one of the attractions which drew such constant visits from Danish marauders. Porlock men fought valiantly in defence of their homes, and beat off the Danes, only to be vanquished by Harold in the summer of 1052, when he landed there on his way from Ireland to join his father at Portland. The Palace was completely destroyed by fire, which spread to the plundered port.

Porlock Church, in which much of the history of Porlock can be traced, shares in the quaint charm of the village, for it is a remarkable little building with a shingled spire

curiously truncated as the result of a storm in 1700. Much of the church dates from the 13th century, but the massive red sandstone arcade probably dates from 1400, and there are some later additions. In the south aisle is a cross-legged effigy dating from 1260, and the church also contains a lovely, though mutilated, altar-tomb with alabaster effigies dating from the 15th century; a delicately carved 16th century Easter sepulchre base in the form of an altar-tomb; and a splendid reredos recently erected in memory of a 17th century rector, Dr. Adam Bellenden, Bishop of Aberdeen and Chancellor of the University there, who had been deposed by the Covenanting Assembly of 1638. The history of the locality is shown in the sculpture, painting, and heraldry of the reredos which, whilst reproducing the principles of the Gothic altar, is not imitative in detail. The picturesque little 15th century manor house of Dovery Court, which stands at the end of the village, is now a Reading Room and social hall.

There are innumerable charming walks and drives in the neighbourhood of Porlock, one of the finest of which is the enchanting cliff walk to Culbone. Not even Devon can show a walk more lovely than this, which winds through hanging woods above the sea and culminates in the wonderful little church which not only claims to be, but almost certainly is, the smallest complete parish church in England. Originally Norman or earlier, it was repaired and slightly altered in the 15th or 16th century. This perfect little building is only 33 feet long, with a nave 12 feet 8 inches wide, and a chancel under 10 feet, though its walls are said to be 2 feet 6 inches thick. Set in glorious woodlands and inaccessible even in this age of speed by any means but walking, or riding on horseback, it is a survival of the past which stirs the imagination and strikes the key-note of this remote and lovely corner of England, where the past seems to mingle naturally with the present.

Minehead, once rather patronisingly known as a "trippers' paradise," has come into its own since the War. The

magnificent hunting, and the neighbouring polo ground on Dunster Lawns, gradually attracted wealthy sportsmen who soon fell under the spell of Minehead's very real charm, and so realised that the town was something more than a convenient headquarters for hunting activities.

Minehead has a singularly delightful situation. Protected by the lovely, pine-clad North Hill from cold winds during the winter, it is yet sufficiently open to the sun and sea-breezes of summer. Six miles or more of golden sands sweep away eastward from the foot of North Hill, edged by a wide swathe of green fields running parallel to the low line of the Brendon Hills.

Though much of Minehead is modern, and the town one which has exerted itself to provide its guests with all the comforts and entertainment they can demand, there are delightfully picturesque corners for those who like a background of antiquity. There are typical West Somerset cottages with gleaming white walls, low thatched eaves, and quaintly tall chimneys lining the often-pictured Church Steps, which lead from the modern town to the glorious old Parish Church on the hill. This Church, dedicated to St. Michael, has a fine Perpendicular tower, with a curious carving on the east side shewing St. Michael weighing the souls of the dead, with the devil on one side, waiting for his victims, and the Virgin Mary, who is obligingly tipping the scales in favour of heaven, on the other. Within the church is a richly-carved rood-screen similar to the one at Dunster and dating from the 15th century. There are fine roofs in the nave and chancel ; a carved Tudor altar ; a tomb with an effigy of a priest in Mass vestments under a beautiful canopy, which probably dates from the 15th century, and several other interesting features. There is an enchanting panorama from the porch of the church, embracing the Brendons, heights of Exmoor, Quantocks, and the Mendips, charming hills which beckon the visitor with a promise of hidden loveliness that is more than fulfilled when their rich valleys are explored.

Harington Effigies in Porlock Church.

Porlock Weir.

At
Porlock
Weir

Culbone
Church.

Directly below the church lies the tiny harbour, which is gay with the coloured sails and hulks of fishing boats and trim yachts, and gives but little hint of the eventful history Minehead has known as a port founded before the Norman conquest. Half-hidden among the picturesque fishermen's cottages of Quay Town is a row of 17th century almshouses which is as great a delight to the eyes as the inscription over the main entrance is intriguing to the curious-minded—a quaintly-worded curse invoked by the founder upon whomsoever may divert his legacy to any other purpose than the use of the poor. Among other links with Minehead's past there is also one of the old coaching inns, which remains much as it was when Richard Warner stayed there in 1800, and commended it in the account he afterwards wrote of his walking tour. Minehead is also famous as the home of the hobby-horse which, though once familiar throughout England, now only survives at Minehead and Padstow. The origin of this May-day custom is now lost, though many trace it back to pagan days. Accompanied by two men, one of whom plays an accordion and the other a drum, the horse " dances " round the town to a traditional air, demanding contributions from every passer-by, and setting the note of light-hearted gaiety with its curious appearance and amusing antics.

As the gateway to Exmoor, the only place in the Northern Hemisphere where the ancient sport of Kings—the hunting of the wild red deer—is now obtainable, Minehead attracts sportsmen not only from all parts of the British Isles, but also from America, but whilst the red deer is of course the supreme attraction, Minehead can also afford glorious sport in foxhunting, harehunting and otterhunting, and there are few mornings in the year when the streets are not gay with huntsmen and women riding to the various meets. As a tourist centre too, Minehead is supreme in West Somerset. The way to the Lorna Doone Country lies open, and Oare, where the chief incidents in the novel take place, is within 12 miles, whilst the adorable villages of Bossington and

Selworthy, and innumerable other equally famous beauty spots, are within easy reach.

Blue Anchor, which lies four miles east of Minehead, is an ideal place for a rest-cure. A mere handful of houses ; a long sea wall ; and miles of magnificent sands ; a view of the wooded hill crowned with Conegar Tower, and of the more distant North Hill, which inspired Turner to paint one of his most famous pictures ; a combination of warm sun and fresh sea-breezes which cannot fail to invigorate—that is Blue Anchor. If the quietude palls, there is Minehead and its amusements within walking distance, and Taunton within a short journey, but there are sufficient walks in the neighbourhood, filled with beauty and historical associations, to keep the lover of solitude happily occupied for many weeks.

Watchet, the last place along the West Somerset coast claiming to be a holiday resort, was until recent years a fishing village pure and simple, and has not sacrificed any of its quaint charm, for all such modern amenities and building operations as take place are confined to the new district, which is divided from the ancient little seaport by the railway line.

The true Watchet is strangely reminiscent of some Sicilian port, and its sea-shore, unlike that at Minehead and Blue Anchor, is a vast stretch of rocks hiding pools which are the delight of the youngsters, who search for prawns, crabs and eels in high glee, whilst their elders find amusement in bathing from the little beaches which seem specially arranged for the purpose, one lying westward of the harbour, and the other beneath the pleasure grounds on the east. The boating at Watchet is delightful, and there are many charming walks in the neighbourhood, the wooded clefts in the line of red cliffs making ideal haunts for picnics. The pleasure grounds make every provision for sport, whilst an attractive golf course has recently been laid out on the cliff-tops of Cleeve Hill.

Though now small and only carrying on sufficient trade to lend the interest of occasional Swedish or Norwegian

urch
eps,
nehead.

Old May-Day
Custom at
Minehead.
The Hobby Horse.

Minehead Sands and North Hill.

ships in the harbour, Watchet was a flourishing port in the days of the Danes, and has historical and literary associations both grave and gay. The Church is built on a scale which befits its ancient importance, and also serves the neighbouring town of Williton. St. Decuman's is the third largest church in the district, and is of great beauty and interest. The architecture dates from varying periods, the earliest work being the fine east window, dating from 1300. The wagon roofs are very fine, and the tower imposing. The church contains many 13th and 14th century tiles, probably made at the neighbouring Cleeve Abbey ; portions of a richly-carved ancient screen incorporated in a more modern one ; a 15th century font ; and a fine Jacobean pulpit, but the chief interest of the church is centered in the splendid series of monuments to the Wyndham family, which include an Elizabethan altar-tomb and canopy, and some very unusual embossed portrait-brasses. The churchyard contains the remains of a 15th century cross, and the holy well of St. Decuman is on the hillside beneath the west end of the church. It was in the churchyard of St. Decuman's that Lorna Doone's mother was traditionally believed to have been buried, but there is nothing to show which, if any, is her grave, and the sexton has been asked so frequently to point it out that he is inclined to become excusably lugubrious on the subject when approached ! The local tradition explaining why the church was dedicated to St. Decuman is particularly delightful. Though several versions which vary in their minor details are current, the most popular one tells that the saint lived in a cave on the hillside on which the church now stands, and that one day when he was stooping to drink from the little river at the foot a Danish warrior stole up behind him and cut off his head. The Saint calmly picked up the head, washed it, and walked away with it under his arm. Tradition, most exasperatingly, does not tell what became of the Saint, nor what the Dane thought of this unusual proceeding, but it is pointed out in support of the story that St. Decuman is always represented with his head under his

arm, and that he is thus shewn on the great West Front of Wells Cathedral.

St. Decuman's has tragic associations, too, for Robert Fitzurse, one of the murderers of St. Thomas à Becket, was born at Orchard, in the parish, and Simon de Brett, one of his accomplices, also lived in the parish, at Sampford Brett. Both of them afterwards did penance for their crime.

Among the many curious historical associations of Watchet is the capture of a ship by a troop of horse, which took place during the Civil War, an unusual proceeding due to the fact that at low tide the water recedes from Watchet Harbour, and the ship was caught unawares in consequence. It is said that it was from Watchet that the Ancient Mariner set sail "below the hill, below the kirk, below the lighthouse top," and the description is certainly more apt in the case of Watchet than any other place on the Somerset Coast. The little port is also mentioned in Chatterton's Rowley poems of "Ælle atte Watchet"—Ælle traditionally being a Governor of Bristol who defeated the Danes at Watchet.

If it seems to the visitor that tradition plays too large a part in the story of Watchet, he must admit that its townsmen have every right to cling to their traditions, for one of them was most satisfactorily vindicated recently when Battle Gore was excavated. All through the centuries the tradition had persisted that this field midway between Watchet and Williton was the site of a battle with the Danes, and when the excavations were carried out, it was proved that the battle had actually taken place there some time in the early part of the 10th century.

A pleasant walk along the cliff top or the seashore from Watchet leads to the seaward end of the Quantocks, with the charming villages of Doniford, St. Audries, East Quantoxhead and Kilve. Innumerable fossils are washed up by every tide, and fine specimens can be secured by the enthusiast without any difficulty.

Blue
Anchor.

Watchet.

A meet of the Staghounds at Venniford, near Minehead.

EXMOOR AND THE BRENDON HILLS

CHAPTER II

There is still an overwhelming majority of people in England who believe that Exmoor lies in Devon. Why this should be so it is impossible to imagine, for from time immemorial only a small outlying portion has strayed over the border, and all the highest peaks, the most glorious valleys, and the heart of this wild upland, are to be found in Somerset. It is true that Devon, with all her own claims to beauty, has so fully realised the advantage of owning Exmoor that she has tried time and again to wrest it from Somerset, but a final heated wrangle in 1894 settled the "battle of the boundaries" for ever, and left Somerset in undisputed possession of the coveted moorland.

That part of Exmoor which lies in Somerset extends from Dunster in the east to Glenthorne in the west, and from Dulverton in the south to the shores of the Severn sea. The Brendon Hills which lie between the Wheddon Cross watershed and the Stogumber valley, although divided from the moorland heights by the long pass extending from Dulverton and Dunster, were also included in the boundaries

of the old Royal Forest of Exmoor, and although no dweller on Exmoor would admit it for a moment, they are still officially a part of the moor.

Few of the Exmoor hills are less than 1,200 ft. in height, and Dunkery Beacon, the highest point in West Somerset, rises to 1,708 ft. above sea level, and the whole thirty square miles of wonderful, heather-clad hills and wooded valleys is so wild and lonely that apart from its charming little towns, its total population is less than 10 people to the square mile !

It is right that Exmoor should lie in Somerset, the county where untouched survivals of the past abound, for Exmoor is a glorious anomaly in modern England. So wild and deserted are its uplands that it is possible to walk for miles without seeing any indication that the centuries have not rolled back to the days of Lorna Doone, or even further. Exmoor smiles up at the sky exactly as it did in the days of the Conqueror ; it is even doubtful if it has changed much since those far-off days when the prehistoric Britons built the famous Tarr steps, and set the Caractacus stone in place. Yet, with all its solitude, it is essentially a friendly moor, impregnated with the warm humanity of the countless jolly hunting squires who have ridden over its length and breadth. Though it has existed for such untold ages, there is about its uplands, bright with heather and gorse, the freshness and glamour of an eternal youth, and a welcoming friendliness which captivates everyone who roams over its breezy hills and through its sheltered valleys. Even its legends have a cheerful humanity far removed from the terror-ridden, demon-haunted tales of Dartmoor, and it seems natural that it should be the background of the tender romance of " Lorna Doone."

THE HOME OF THE WILD RED DEER.

Exmoor is a fit home for the wild red deer, for little but wild life flourishes on the moorlands. Wild ponies ; wild deer ; wild sheep ; and such unusual bird life as the buzzard

Tarr Steps,
Dulverton.

unkery Beacon,
xmoor.

and the kestrel, are to be found. There is no question of their being wild in the restricted sense of roaming in a private park. As Richard Jefferies remarks in his delightful and often-quoted book about the Exmoor red deer, " the red deer are wild in the fullest sense of the term, as wild and unrestrained in their movements as the deer of the back-woods of America," and what he wrote in 1884 is equally true to-day.

It seems at first incredible that in such a populous and highly cultivated country as England there should be such miles of apparently fertile land surviving as a primitive wilderness, but the reason is simple. The heather-clad uplands, and even the wooded valleys, have a soil so scanty that all efforts at cultivation have failed. In the very heart of Exmoor there survives the ruined mansion and ring fence of one wealthy man who tried, over a century ago, to develop the moor and merely succeeded in ruining himself, and leaving a lasting warning to others of the futility of pitting human endeavours against the untamed spirit of the moors.

Though known as the Exmoor Forest, there are no trees in this central region, for the term " forest " is used in its mediæval sense of an open hunting ground, as opposed to an enclosed park. It is still surrounded by the ring fence, 52 miles in circumference, built by the optimistic Mr. Knight in 1815, but the heather is again triumphant, and the deer negotiate the fence with ease.

There are numerous prehistoric barrows and entrenchments scattered over the moorland, in addition to the Tarr Steps and the Caractacus Stone, but Dunster has the only castle in the district. Doubtless such a wild land did not seem worthy of defence to our ancestors, who were more given to appraising the potential wealth of land, than its intrinsic beauty, and found it too congenial as a hunting centre to undertake the difficulties of developing and populating the district.

The rolling, heather-clad uplands of Exmoor have much that is kin to all wild places of the earth. The atmosphere is so deceptive that peaks look alluringly simple to climb and most attractively near at hand, when they are in reality many miles away and difficult to conquer. The apparently slight contours of a vast plain hide deep valleys with charming rivers flowing through them, many of them of exquisite beauty, and everywhere there is a glory of colouring which is Exmoor's special characteristic. Both the Barle and the Exe rise near Simonsbath, in the heart of the moor, and flow through enchanting valleys where dark forests of pine and fir, or the rich green of verdant woodlands, are in fascinating contrast to the surrounding moorlands, and there are countless other smaller, but no less charming streams to be found in all parts of the moor.

In such a countryside, whose untamed wildness is its chief asset, the visitor who cares for beauty will make no plans. There is probably no guide-book to Exmoor (and there are many) which does not emphasise this fact, and rightly. It is impossible to capture the free, wild spirit of this glorious moorland by a set plan. The only way is to wander over it, letting Exmoor reveal its beauties, which it will never fail to do to those who seek it with an understanding heart. Best of all is to join in the very life of Exmoor—the deer hunting, which can reveal a world of interest even to those who follow on foot. Though the red deer can now be hunted in New Zealand, Exmoor is still triumphantly the only place in the world where the ancient sport of Kings is still carried on as it was in the time of the Conqueror. The Exmoor stag hunt of to-day is in every respect an exact parallel with the hunt in the days of the Chevy Chase, carrying out all the old customs and traditions, and preserving the language of the chase with such accuracy that though our everyday speech would seem like a foreign language to a noble of the early Middle Ages, he could converse with the Exmoor huntsmen without difficulty.

Winsford
Village.

Luccom

Postman fording the Barle, Simonsbath.

EXMOOR TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

Many of the loveliest villages of Somerset are to be found on Exmoor—adorable Selworthy, quaint little Bossington, Luccombe, Winsford—their name is legion, and all are so incredibly lovely that it is impossible to choose between them.

Dulverton, of world-wide reputation among stag hunters and fishermen—for Exmoor streams are as famous for their trout as the moors for deer—is the chief town of Exmoor, a charming place with an individuality as attractive as it is unusual.

Though the adorably impetuous little river Barle rushes hurriedly through Dulverton, as though all impatience for its meeting with the River Exe just below the town, not even the beauty of the countryside will draw the visitor from at least a few hours' dreaming in the little town. Set in hills which give glorious views of the valleys of the Barle and Exe, Dulverton is one of those places which have no relics of their history, and yet suggest an atmosphere of the past more successfully than many a town filled with mediæval buildings. Frequently mentioned in " Lorna Doone," it was the home of Jan Ridd's Uncle Huckaback, and as such is of interest to all lovers of the famous novel, no less than to those who regard it as the starting point for their explorations of Dartmoor.

In the neighbourhood are an Early Perpendicular church at Brushford, near Dulverton Station ; Combe, an interesting 16th century house which was the home of a branch of the Sydenham family ; the rather scanty remains of the 12th century Barlynch Priory which was the only religious house on Exmoor and now stands beside the river Exe like a miniature Tintern ; the prehistoric camp of Mounsey Castle on the hillside above the Barle, and the primitive stone causeway known as Tarr Steps. Built in unknown ages, this beautiful bridge is one of the finest prehistoric monuments of its kind in England. It consists of large slabs of stone laid on piled piers. The average length of a slab is about

seven feet, with a width of three feet six inches, and the piers facing the current are protected by sloping stones four feet in length. There are no less than seventeen openings, and the total length of the bridge, including the paved approaches, is 180 feet. From the steps it is but a short climb to the top of Winsford Hill, where the ancient stone bearing the name of a kinsman of Caractacus, the famous British chief who defied the Romans, is still standing—a stone to conjure up many proud memories of the heroism of Britons in those far-off days.

From Winsford Hill the road drops down to the little hamlet of Winsford, with its delightful thatched cottages and picturesque inn. There is an old bridge spanning the Exe, and no less than five other diminutive bridges over rills which are shaded by huge and ancient trees. The church has a fine tower which completes the charm of this arrestingly pretty village. Withypool, which lies about two miles west of Winsford Hill, is scarcely less delightful, and is the starting point for many lovely roadways leading to the vastness and silence of the moors. It was here that Walter Raymond, the greatest writer on Somerset's people, customs and dialect, lived for sixteen years in a cottage rented at 1/- a week.

Exford, the headquarters of the Devon and Somerset staghounds, is naturally in the heart of Exmoor, and draws eager sportsmen from all parts of the world during the short hunting season, and many of those who come to explore Exmoor during the rest of the year. It is a cheerful little town whose picturesque bridge was the scene of a characteristic exploit of Tom Faggus, described in "Lorna Doone." Between Exford and Simonsbath the scenery is wild and desolate, passing Cloven Rocks where Carver Doone and John Ridd met in their last fight, and the Doone sank to death in the treacherous ground.

Quaintly enough, though Simonsbath is generally acknowledged as the "capital" of Exmoor, it is frequently entirely ignored in books about the moor—due, probably, to the fact that it is but a small village, though a charming one.

It lies in a hollow of the hills beside the moor, and owes its meed of fame to that Mr. Knight who has already been mentioned, to whom the church is due, and whose unfinished mansion still stands near the village. Simonsbath is said to derive its name from an outlaw called Symon who took his bath in the pool above the bridge. It was also the scene of one of the numerous hairbreadth escapes of Tom Faggus, the highwayman, so sympathetically portrayed in "Lorna Doone." The Chains, now the only really dangerous bog on the moorlands, lies near Simonsbath and its lonely, desolate surroundings are the birthplace of the river Exe.

THE DOONE VALLEY.

Oare and Badgworthy Water—what romance lies in the very names of tiny village and lonely river to every reader of "Lorna Doone"! What matter whether Lorna and Jan Ridd ever lived? Such people are more real than many a famous hero of history. Suffice it that robber Doones did once live on Exmoor, and that the broken walls in the Doone valley were their stronghold in the 17th century; and again, let it suffice that Jan Ridd was truly a giant among men, and received his education at Tiverton school. If the story of their lives has been transformed into the glamour of romance, even as Blackmore described the Badgworthy Water with the art of a poet, transforming the lovely little stream to a far greater river, who but a fool would complain? It is for the visitor to see with the eyes of romance, too, and re-people the valley with the creations of Blackmore's fancy. Oare church, at least, can help him in his endeavour, for though the mediæval nave and chancel have been altered and lengthened, it is still possible to picture a marriage of the period, which would have taken place between the modern choir-seats, some way west of the present altar. The simple pathos of Blackmore's account of the wedding, culminating in the shooting of Lorna at the altar, gains in intensity when re-lived in the quiet little church.

The river flowing through the Doone valley is a tributary of the Badgworthy Water, which forms the boundary between Devon and Somerset. The valley itself is high up on the moor and is but a fold in the hills $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles from Malmsmead, where the Badgworthy and Oare Waters meet to form the Lyn.

It should be remembered that, although Blackmore rightly developed the charming valley to a grim and awe-inspiring place fit to be the home of the savage Doones, and bearing little resemblance to the original, all the other places he mentions in "Lorna Doone" are described with a loving care and fidelity which enables the visitor to recognise them at a glance.

THE VALE OF PORLOCK.

The heights of Exmoor are chiefly to be found in the north-west of the moors, near the sea-shore, and can be reached from Dunster, Minehead, or Porlock. Many of the loveliest of the Exmoor villages actually lie in the Vale of Porlock, and command enchanting views of Dunkery Beacon.

Dunkery may be climbed from Wheddon Cross or Luccombe; by way of the delightful Horner Combe and Cloutsham, famous as the scene of the opening Meet of the hunting season; or from any of the other villages sheltering under its bracken and heather-clad slopes. The view from the summit is one of the finest in England, extending from Brown Willy in Cornwall to the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire, a distance of over a hundred and fifty miles. The remains of the ancient hearths on its summit are a reminder that it was once one of the great Beacons of England, blazing the warning which was taken up by the Malvern Beacon and so spread across the kingdom when the Armada was sweeping down on England. Blackmore vividly describes the lighting of Dunkery Beacon in "Lorna Doone."

Among the innumerable villages vying with each other in beauty which add to the natural loveliness in the Vale of

ulverton,
ver Barle.

Badgewo
Water,
Doone
Valley.

Horner Valley, the home of the Red Deer.

Porlock is Luccombe, a little hamlet whose cottages are so bowered in flowers that it is like an enchanted garden, massed with yellow laburnum, white clematis, billowy roses, tall fuchsias, and fragrant honeysuckle, all delicately lovely against a background of tall dark cypress trees which add to the suggestion that Luccombe has been transferred intact from the sunny land of Italy. The parish church is chiefly remarkable for the beauty of its situation at the foot of Dunkery, under the eastern woods of Horner. The earliest part of the church dates from the 13th century, and there are beautiful additions made in the 15th and 16th centuries, including several very unusual features. Some fine monuments and a richly carved Easter sepulchre are among the special treasures of the church.

Across the Vale from Luccombe lie Tivington, where there is a fine 15th century chapel ; enchantingly lovely Allerford with its packhorse bridge and delightful, old-world cottages ; Bossington, with its cluster of picturesque cottages set beside a little stream shaded by gigantic walnut trees ; West Lynch, with its flawless little manorial chapel dating in its entirety from the Perpendicular period ; and Holnicote, a tiny village chiefly notable for a mansion of the Aclands, a famous hunting family. The modern mansion occupies the site of a house burned down at the end of the 17th century—a disaster which Sir Thomas Acland, the eighth baronet, lamented chiefly for the loss of his collection of antlers.

It is from Holnicote that a tree-shaded lane leads to the ancient, famous, and entirely delightful village of Selworthy, the crowning beauty of a district where beauty reigns supreme. Here are no modern innovations to spoil the old-world loveliness of the cottages which were built by Sir Thomas Acland as a retreat for the old people on his estate. Charmingly grouped round the justly famous Selworthy Green, which slopes up to the gracious old church, and sheltered by woodlands, each cottage has a sunny porch, shining white walls, and deep thatched eaves bowered in flowers. There is no place in the country quite like Selworthy

which many declare to be England's loveliest village. The splendid church is of a size and interest which is exceptional in such a small village. Built in the Perpendicular style, it includes some of the finest work of that period. Much of the seating is ancient, the pulpit dates from the early part of the 16th century, and the west gallery is a beautiful example of 18th century work. In the churchyard is the base block and shaft of a fine cross, and a flight of stone steps commanding the often pictured view of Dunkery Beacon. The famous Selworthy walks extend for over thirty miles among woodlands of ilex, oak and other forest trees.

Among the hills between Selworthy and Minehead are the ruins of Burgundy Chapel, a small sanctuary which measures only 35 ft. by 16 ft. The name is probably a corruption of Bircombe, the accounts of Dunster Castle for the year 1405 mentioning a chapel of that name. Bratton Court, a gracious old manor house, now a farm, lies near the Minehead road, and is chiefly interesting architecturally for the use of oak for mullions and window tracery, in place of the more usual stone work. A little room, above the entrance gateway, is popularly said to have been used as a study by Henry de Bracton, a famous lawyer of the thirteenth century, but as there is nothing to show that the present building is of earlier date than the 15th century, he is more likely to have used some room in the earlier mediæval hall known to have occupied the site.

Eastward from Dunkery, along the road to Dunster, is Wootton Courtney, which has an interesting church with a saddle-backed tower, and commands magnificent views of Dunkery and the Vale of Porlock.

DUNSTER.

Dunster is another of Somerset's survivals of the past—a feudal town which has acknowledged the same family as overlords for nearly six hundred years, and which owes its prosperity, its beauty, and even its very existence to the

Selworthy.

A quai
corner
Selwort

Dunster Castle.

owners of the castle dominating the main street. The term "town" is misleading to those who do not know the charm of Dunster. Many villages are far larger and far less lovely, for Dunster is chiefly concentrated in the broad and sunny main street in which the famous Yarn Market stands, with another winding street branching off to the church and the picturesque little packhorse bridge across the River Avill.

Dunster Castle is one of the few in England which have only changed ownership once since the Conquest. Its present owners, the Luttrells, have held it uninterruptedly in the male line since the Lady Elizabeth Luttrell bought it from the de Mohuns in 1375, and even then the Luttrell family was a proud and ancient one, having held the Norman castle at East Quantoxhead since it was granted to their ancestor who had come over in the train of William the Conqueror. The Luttrells of Dunster are one of the most illustrious families of the West Country, and the history of "Dunster and its Lords" by Sir H. Maxwell-Lyte makes fascinating reading.

Though many of the earlier Luttrells were famous warriors —Sir Hugh became Seneschal of Normandy in the 15th century—their exploits chiefly took place abroad, and the only fighting Dunster saw was during the Civil War, when it was brilliantly defended for the King under Colonel Francis Wyndham, the siege lasting 160 days, and ending with the Colonel's surrender to Blake, the great Parliamentarian general.

The only link with the original owners in the existing castle is the 13th century gateway built by Reginald de Mohun. The great gatehouse with its four flanking towers was built by Sir Hugh Luttrell in the time of Henry V, and the greater part of the present-day building is Elizabethan, with additions and alterations made in successive centuries which added to the comfort of the castle as a dwelling place without destroying its general effect of age and stateliness.

The interior of the castle, which is not open to the public, contains many rare treasures, including splendid paintings,

a carved oak staircase unequalled in England, and a room hung with painted Spanish leather which is beyond price. The muniment room is unique, as none of the documents relating to the affairs of the castle and its owners is missing. The whole of this huge collection of documents was put in order and scheduled by William Prynne in 1650, when he was sent as a prisoner to the castle by Oliver Cromwell. When Prynne arrived there he had not only had both his ears cut off, but was branded on both cheeks as a seditious libeller. Prynne wasted his talents in plaguing both Royalists and Parliamentarians, but he had real ability, and the schedule he made was so excellently arranged that it is still in use at the castle.

The most famous manuscript associated with Dunster Castle is, however, in the British Museum— a national treasure of incalculable value. Prepared by order of Sir Geoffrey Luttrell, the Luttrell Psalter is justly celebrated for its illustrations of social life in the middle of the 14th century. It is one of the chief sources of information about mediæval life, and copies of its quaint drawings appear in almost every book on costumes and characteristics of the Middle Ages.

The grounds of the castle, to which the public are admitted, are beautifully laid out, and the many sub-tropical trees and plants are a testimony to the mildness of the climate in this part of the country. A splendid lemon tree growing against the castle walls, and only protected on nights of heavy frost, supplies the household with lemons all through the year, frequently bearing flowers, green fruit and ripe lemons at the same time. The terrace immediately below the castle commands glorious views of the Severn sea, the deer park, and the heights of the Brendons and Exmoor away to Dunkery Beacon. On Gallox Hill above the deer park are the remains of two ancient camps, one Roman and the other British. Facing the castle from the opposite end of the main street of Dunster is the wooded Conegar hill, crowned by an unfinished ornamental tower built in the 17th century and frequently mistakenly photographed as Dunster Castle.

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Dunster.

Dunster.

Dunster High Street would have delighted Jane Austen—so trim, so picturesque, and so reminiscent of the past in a pleasantly suggestive way. The lovely Yarn Market built in 1609 strikes the note which is maintained in the stately Luttrell Arms, and the old-world houses flanking the wide, sunny roadway.

The Luttrell Arms has carried on its tradition of hospitality for over three and a half centuries, and much of the building is of a still earlier date. Tradition says that it was originally the residence of the Abbots of Cleeve, and its massive dignity certainly lends an air of truth to the supposition. Its charming terraced garden commands a magnificent view of the castle and seashore, framed in wooded hills. The fine old porch, the oak room with its elaborate carving and gabled roof, and the many examples of rich plasterwork, are full of interest.

In the road leading to the church is the quaint and unusual-looking building called, for no known reason, the Nunnery. The church dates chiefly from the 15th century, though the west door is Norman and there is a 13th century stone altar. In 1499 a dispute arose between the parishioners and the monks belonging to the neighbouring priory, who until that time had used the building in perfect harmony. As a result the Abbot of Glastonbury, who was called in to arbitrate, arranged that the eastern church should be given over to the Prior, and the nave to the Vicar. The glorious carved oak screen—probably the finest of its kind in existence—marked the boundary between the two churches until moved to its present position in 1876. The magnificent tombs of the Luttrells ; a tessellated pavement ; and some ancient coffers, are all in the Priory Church. There are the remains of a 14th century cross in the churchyard, and in the vicarage grounds are the ruins of the ancient Benedictine Priory said to have been built by William de Mohun in the time of the Conqueror, and now made beautiful with a riot of old-fashioned flowers. The Monk's Barn, and a 13th century stone dovecote, are in a perfect state of preservation. Beyond

the church a charming lane, bordered by thatched cottages set in gardens ablaze with flowers, leads to the delightful Castle Mill and the ancient packhorse bridge. The Butter Cross which once stood in the market place now stands a little way outside Dunster, beside the Minehead road. There is also an interesting 15th century manorhouse at Lower Marsh, midway between the town and the seashore.

As if the man-made charm of Dunster was not sufficient to delight the eye and fascinate the mind, its surroundings are of exceptional beauty. The Castle is nobly set on a great tor above the famous Dunster Lawns and the deer park, and the whole town is hemmed in by low green hills which culminate in the distant heights of Exmoor. There are endless delightful walks through the park and over heather-clad Grabbist Hill, and the attractions of the seashore are within two miles. Every lovely corner of Exmoor and the sea-coast of West Somerset can be reached with ease. Polo matches are held every week during the summer in the enchanting setting of the Dunster Lawns, and the hunting is as excellent as at Minehead, which lies three miles away, just beyond the pretty little hamlet of Alcombe.

THE BRENDONS.

No part of West Somerset has been more consistently neglected, by tourists and holiday-makers alike, than the Brendon Hills. Few guide books do more than mention their name, with the result that everyone concludes they have nothing to offer the lover of beauty and history. Not one in a hundred visitors to Dunster realises that the charming hills and wooded valleys of Dunster Park are a part of the Brendons, and that serenely beautiful as the Park is, there are equally lovely corners for those who care to seek them.

It is an ideal countryside for the lover of solitude, for even the chief roadways are rarely frequented by any but those who live in the villages of the Brendons, and there are hamlets which seldom see a stranger from one year's end to another.

Polo Ground,
Dunster.

The Nunnery,
Dunster.

Old Cottages,
Dunster.

There is a roadway of incomparable beauty linking Washford with Wiveliscombe, by way of Elworthy, passing over the eastern slopes of the Brendons, and at times commanding views across the Vale of Taunton Deane. Another road leads from Dunster along the valley of the Avill, skirting the western end of the range, and passing through Timberscombe and Cutcombe to Dulverton. Yet another, more hilly, road climbs from Dulverton and crosses the whole range diagonally to Watchet. Best of all, there is an ancient and neglected but entirely fascinating trackway running from Elworthy to Cutcombe—part of the old highway from Taunton to Exmoor—by which the contrast between the sylvan scenery of the Eastern Brendons, and the wild heather-clad beauty of the western hills is emphasised. This remarkable trackway runs for 10 miles at an unvarying altitude of 1,200 feet, and commands delightful glimpses of the distant Severn Sea.

As the natural link between Exmoor and the Quantocks, the scenery of the Brendons merges imperceptibly from a moorland atmosphere to the warm friendliness of the fertile Quantocks, and in the same way the villages on the western hills have all the strength and vitality of the moorland, whilst those in the east share the air of luxurious contentment so characteristic of Quantock villages. The highest peak of the range is Lype Hill, which is 1,391 ft. Croydon Hill, an outlying, detached block at the north-west of the range, is 1,256 ft. in height.

VILLAGES OF THE BRENDONS.

The villages of the Brendons cluster most thickly in the south-west, near Wiveliscombe, and among the foothills near the Severn Sea. The northern slopes claim two solitary but lovely outposts in Treborough, which lies in delightful woodlands near a picturesque waterfall, and Luxborough, in a wild and lonely setting between the main Brendon Ridge and Croydon Hill. Timberscombe, set where the Porlock road joins the main road between Dunster and the south,

and as fair as its name, lies on the wooded slopes of Croydon Hill above the valley of the Avill. It has a little Perpendicular church with some interesting features. Cutcombe, which lies further south in the Avill valley, is equally convenient as a starting point for climbing Dunkery Beacon on Exmoor, Croydon Hill, or the western slopes of the Brendons.

Dulverton, though an Exmoor town, is a starting point for Raddington, which lies close to the Devon border, and has a primitive looking church with a good panelled oak roof, fine screen, and interesting though mutilated piscina ; Upton which lies in the lovely Haddeo Valley ; sequestered Skilgate ; and Brompton Regis, with a church embodying all the local characteristics.

Wiveliscombe, set in the Vale of Taunton Deane, has a still more interesting group of Brendon villages within easy reach, including Clatworthy, which is situated on a low hill in a deep, wooded dell, and is overlooked by an ancient British camp commanding the entrance to the green glade through which the River Tone comes down from the hills ; Huish Champflower, which has one of the few Decorated churches in the county, set beside the River Tone ; Chipstable, a picturesque village with an ancient and beautiful church ; Brompton Ralph, with its tall church tower—so conspicuous from the Quantocks ; Tolland with the neighbouring Gaulden Farm, an old manor house to whose seclusion Bishop Turbeville of Exeter retired after losing the see in 1559 ; and charmingly named Withiel Florey with its small Perpendicular church.

Most interesting and lovely of all are the villages along the roads between Wiveliscombe and Washford. Elworthy has a small Perpendicular church with a carved and illuminated screen and a pulpit approached by a rood staircase, both dated 1632, and some ancient glass. The village lies at the top of a pass in the shelter of a hill crowned by a British camp called Elworthy Barrows, which used to be connected by a track with Clatworthy Barrows, a few miles to the south. Monksilver lies in a deep valley, and has an

Monksilver.

the
rendon
ills.

Carhampton.

interesting church containing curiously wrought bench ends, a carved pulpit, a panelled but nameless altar tomb, some ancient glass, and several really fine gargoyles.

In addition to the innumerable prehistoric remains to be found on the Brendons, there are mediæval remains of exceptional interest, and several links with the Devon Raleigh family as unexpected in this lonely region as they are fascinating. Raleigh's Cross, set up on the Brendon Hill not far from the source of the River Tone, marks the place where the body of Simon de Raleigh, a hero of Agincourt, rested on its way from Devon for burial at Nettlecombe, which was an ancient patrimony of the Raleighs, and is full of interest for all who care for ancient and lovely buildings, whilst Combe Sydenham House, a short distance away, has associations with another Devon hero—Sir Francis Drake.

Set among the eastern foothills, overlooking the Vale of Taunton Deane, are Lydeard St. Lawrence, and the adorable village of Combe Florey, as lovely and flowerlike as its charming name suggests. Lydeard St. Lawrence clings to the hillside below its dominating church, facing the gracious line of the Quantocks. The church is chiefly 14th century work, though the aisle and arcade dividing it from the nave date from the 15th century. The capitals of the arcade have very rich and unusual carving. Lydeard St. Lawrence and Combe Florey give the first hint of the rich store of literary associations awaiting the traveller in the Quantocks, for Southey's grandfather was a farmer in the former village, and that brilliant writer and wit, Sydney Smith, was rector of Combe Florey from 1829 until his death in 1845. Combe Florey lies in a secluded little valley and is presided over by a church whose chief interest is concentrated in three fine effigies, and a 13th century slab recording the burial of a nun's heart. There is a restored cross in the churchyard, and a Tudor manor house in the village.

In the northern foothills, beauty of situation, charm of man-made manors and cottages, and historical associations of engrossing interest, go hand in hand.

Carhampton lies less than a mile inland from Blue Anchor, the road between the two villages passing the ancient manor house of Marshwood Farm, which has in its porch some curious plaster figures. Carhampton is an attractive village which supplements the limited accommodation of Blue Anchor. Its church has a fine painted screen, but is eclipsed in interest by the neighbouring parish church of Withycombe, the best example in the district of a small church which escaped enlargement in the Perpendicular period. Withycombe lies in the shelter of Croydon Hill, and its church is mainly 13th century work, with a fine screen dating from about 1500, and two exceptionally beautiful monuments : the figure of a lady, probably of the Fitzurse family, of about 1300, and a youth of about 1290. There is a brass in the vestry to Joan Sandhill, who was born in the Elizabethan manor-house of Sandhill nearby, and was reputed to be a witch. A local legend tells that when the neighbours returned after her funeral in 1612 they found her at home frying eggs and bacon !

Washford, which also lies on the main road, is yet another delightful, friendly village of whitewashed cottages with thatched roofs, bowered in climbing roses and honeysuckle, with the crowning glory of Cleeve Abbey to lure the lover of ancient buildings.

Very confusingly, there is a village known as Old Cleeve half-way between Washford and Blue Anchor, in the opposite direction to the Abbey. Old Cleeve is a place of much charm, with an interesting church, and an ancient Lady Chapel which was once a shrine of considerable local repute.

The old chroniclers called the valley in which Cleeve Abbey stands " The Flowery Vale," and no one to-day can deny the aptness of the name. The green hollow seems to gather up and imprison the mellow sunlight to enhance the beauty of the flowery meadows, and shine kindly on the ancient walls of the Abbey, which are in such a splendid state of preservation that the term " ruin " seems anomalous.

Old Cleeve Church.

Williton.

Cleeve Abbey, East side of Cloister.

Cleeve Abbey's appeal to the eager tourist with but a smattering of archæology is exceptionally great, for here are no crumbling walls defying all but the most expert imaginary reconstruction, but a building where even the roofs are intact, and so perfect and stately in its calm dignity that the least skilled are inspired to picture the life of the monks in detail. Only the church and infirmary are missing, and recent excavations have disclosed the foundations of these and yielded archæologists sufficient details for a complete knowledge of their size and design.

Cleeve Abbey was the only Cistercian house in Somerset, and its monks kept the austere rules of their Order so strictly that they took no part in national events, and consequently did not increase in wealth or power. Founded by William de Roumara, third Earl of Lincoln, in 1188, at the time of the Dissolution the reputation of its inmates was such that even Sir Thomas Arundell, the King's Receiver, was moved to write to Cromwell, "I beg . . . that the house may stand. In it are 17 priests of honest life who keep hospitality." It was, nevertheless, given to Robert, Earl of Sussex, in the following year. The greater part of the buildings are early English, with a fine refectory of the 15th century. Over the gateway is inscribed in Latin, "This gate shall ever be open to all who enter honestly."

Orchard Wyndham, the ancient seat of the Wyndham family—a combination of 15th century, Tudor, and 18th century work, and Nettlecombe Court, the 16th century manor of the Trevelyans, which was enlarged in the 18th century, are both reached from Williton, a pleasant and prosperous little town. Both families have a long and brilliant record, and both made endless sacrifices in the Royalist cause during the Civil War. Nettlecombe Church stands in the grounds of the manor, and contains some splendid early monuments to the Raleigh family, who were the former owners of Nettlecombe Court.

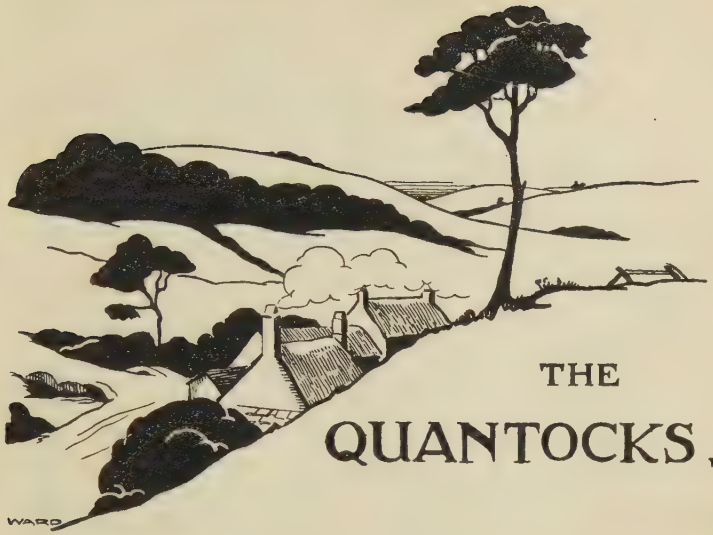
Sampford Brett, which lies a mile south-east of Williton, derives its name from the family of Brett, one of whose

members took part in the murder of Thomas à Becket. The church contains a fine effigy of a mailed warrior and some carved bench ends, on one of which is the figure of a lady believed to be that Florence Wyndham who lived in the 16th century and was buried alive at St. Decuman's Church at Watchet, having fallen into a trance which was mistaken for death. Her story is still a favourite in the neighbourhood. The local sexton opened the coffin to steal her rings, and finding them difficult to remove, was about to cut off her fingers when she awoke from the trance and not only returned home to live many more years, but subsequently gave birth to a son John, whose tomb is also in St. Decuman's.

Stogumber is a remote village of thatched cottages surrounded by hills and dominated by its spacious church, which has several interesting features including a fine 16th century brass to Margery Sydenham, and an elaborate 17th century tomb to Sir George Sydenham and his two wives. The ghost of this cavalier who lived to see the restoration of the Stuarts is said to ride down the Combe every night between midnight and cockcrow. The ancestral mansion of the Sydenham family lies two miles from Stogumber. This picturesque Elizabethan manor house was the home of the Sydenhams for many generations, and it was one of the family whom Sir Francis Drake married as his second wife. A local tradition tells that after his betrothal Sir Francis sailed away on one of his adventurous voyages, and was so long absent that the lady thought him dead, and was persuaded to marry another, but just as they were setting out for the church a cannon ball fell from the skies at her feet. Taking this, very naturally, as a message from Drake, she decided to await his return and married him soon after in Stogumber Church. The "cannon-ball"—a meteorite—is preserved at Combe Sydenham to this day. The walks in the neighbourhood of Stogumber are exceptionally lovely, even for West Somerset, the Quantocks and Brendons being equally accessible from the village.

Cleeve Abbey.
Interior and exterior
views of Refectory.

Cothelstone Manor.



THE QUANTOCKS

CHAPTER III

In some curious way, the Quantocks impress even the casual visitor with their air of rich contentment. It is not merely that nature has been prodigal in her gifts to this lovely, fertile range of hills, but that an air of happy serenity penetrates to every village, and climbs to the heights where long stretches of heather and bracken seem as fresh and untouched as in the days when the world was young. There is an atmosphere which suggests the fullness of contentment which we associate with the spacious days of Elizabeth, when England could lay just claim to the title of " merry," and quaint customs and age-old traditions were maintained as a matter of course. Whilst so much of the rest of England is being modernised, life flows on among these lovely hills with a placidity born of prosperity and quiet content. Rich manor houses, fine old farms, and charming cottages, are to be seen, but no factories, or even towns, to disturb the suggestion of ancient peace and plenty.

These enchanting hills stretch from Hestercombe, above the Vale of Taunton Deane, to the shores of the Severn Sea at Quantoxhead, a distance of about twelve miles. Although nowhere more than four miles wide, they frequently rise to a height of over a thousand feet, and Will's Neck, the highest point, achieves 1,260 feet, but everywhere their contours are softly rounded, and decked with a glorious mantle of blazing purple heather and golden gorse, with many a deep wood and silvery waterfall to add to their infinite beauty.

It is a friendly, welcoming land which has never known warfare—unless in some unrecorded battle of the prehistoric inhabitants—and happy in its many joyous memories; a land where poets have wandered in ecstasy, rejoicing in the inspiration of its beauty. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey—three of England's greatest nature poets—are associated with the Quantocks, and their intense affection for these hills is the measure of the tender charm of the district.

Although there are no towns actually in the Quantock district, Bridgwater in the north, and Taunton in the south, can be made the starting point for explorations of the charming villages and their attendant hamlets which make up the population of the Quantocks. From Bridgwater the eastern slopes, with their richly wooded combes, may be explored, whilst from Taunton the steeper western face of the hills, glorious with hanging woods, can be reached.

Although so unspoiled as to seem isolated from the world, the whole range is delightfully easy to reach. Each of the railway stations between Taunton and Watchet serves some charming Quantock village which is the starting point for one of the peaks, whilst the main road from Minehead to Bridgwater skirts the eastern face of the range, and an ancient British trackway, carpeted with turf and heather, runs along the hill tops for the whole length of the range.

Bishop's Lydeard, a picturesque place in the Vale of Taunton Deane, is the starting point for the first of the true

Quantock villages—Cothelstone, a place filled with beauty, where the visitor finds so much to love and linger over that only a promise of the delights to come can possibly lure him away. There is a wonderful old manor house, outstandingly lovely even in Somerset, a county of glorious old manors ; a Perpendicular church rich in mediæval treasures of rare beauty ; and some charmingly old-world cottages. Though now so serene and fair that it is at once a promise and a symbol of the peace and beauty of Quantoxland, Cothelstone has seen tragic sights which have been spared the other Quantock villages, for it was a lord of Cothelstone Manor who spent his fortune in the cause of King Charles I, and for his pains had his manor practically destroyed by a Parliamentarian bombardment. His successor, though strongly against Monmouth's cause, pleaded for the lives of two rebels condemned by Judge Jeffreys, and was rewarded for his humanity by having them hung from his own gateposts. This gateway still stands at the end of a long avenue, as a salutary reminder to those who hanker for a return of the " good old days." The Manor itself is a blending of the Tudor and Renaissance styles, and its decoration is almost unique, there being only one other house of the kind in England.

Cothelstone Beacon, which rises behind the little village, commands a really glorious panorama by sea and land, embracing the whole of the vale of Taunton Deane stretching away to the Blackdowns ; the Brendon Hills backed by the heights of Exmoor ; the marshes of Sedgemoor, broken by the Poldens and backed by the Mendips which plunge into the sea at Weston-super-Mare ; and the Severn Sea bounded by the distant coast of Wales.

Hidden away among trees on the high road to Crowcombe is Bagborough, beloved of huntsmen, the starting point for an ascent of Bagborough Hill. Crowcombe, enfolded in the quiet of contented age, is lent dignity by its fine old church, manor house, and ancient Church House. The carved bench ends in the 15th century church, one of which bears the date 1534, are particularly fine, and the octagonal font

is also richly carved. Outside the south porch is an exceedingly rich example of a stone cross, sculptured with the figures of St. John the Baptist, a bishop, and a female probably intended to represent the Prioress of the convent of Studeley, to whom the manor of Crowcombe was granted in the 13th century. Opposite the church is the Church House, now carefully restored. At one time the upper part of the building belonged to one landlord, and the lower part to another. When the roof became decayed and it was suggested the two owners should share the cost of repairs, the owner of the lower half said he contemplated pulling his part down! Richard Jefferies wrote of this Church House in "Summer in Somerset," published in his last book of collected essays. Crowcombe Court, whose entrance gates are between the church and the Church House, is the ancient home of the Carews, many of whom are buried in the church. In an open space at the end of the village there is another gracefully proportioned cross, dating from the 14th century, which is in a perfect state of preservation.

Crowcombe is a starting point for so many delightful rambles that the visitor needs no guide book or map. Every pathway is decked in beauty and leads to some hilltop, manor, or village of special interest, but among the many charming walks, those to Will's Neck, Halsway Manor, and Bicknoller may be specially mentioned. The famous Heddon Oak grows beside the Stogumber road—an enormous tree which is actually marked on all maps of the district. It is said the spot is haunted by the ghosts of some of Monmouth's followers who were hanged from the branches of the Oak.

Will's Neck derives its name from "the ridge of the Welshman"—the "Wealas" of the Saxons, who built the tumuli to be found on the summit. The road climbing the hillside from Crowcombe leads past Blue Ball, a tiny hamlet set on the slopes of Will's Neck, half-way to the Triscombe Stone which, in spite of its fame as a landmark, is of such modest proportions that only those who are on the alert notice its existence. This small stone is not only

Crowcombe
Church.
Showing ca
bench ends.
One bears
date, 1534.

Crowcombe
Village.

Triscombe Village and the Quantocks, near Will's Neck.

the rallying point for the opening meet of the Quantock staghounds, but is also, according to the prevalent local belief, endowed with power to grant any wish formulated whilst sitting upon it. As the highest point of the Quantocks, Will's Neck commands a magnificent panorama of Somerset and the Severn Sea.

Halsway Manor, which stands in a park beside the road to Bicknoller, in the shelter of Hurley Beacon, stands on the site of a hunting box of the great Cardinal Beaufort, the guardian of Henry VI—a reminder that the record of sport in Quantoxland is as long as on Exmoor itself. Trendle Ring, an almost circular camp about an acre in area, is unusual in its situation, being pitched on a steep slope of the hill above Bicknoller.

The pleasant little village of Bicknoller is chiefly notable for its church, which used to be a chapelry of Stogumber. It has a screen dating from 1500, some of the finest bench-ends in the district, a 17th century monument, and other interesting features. The deep wooded glen of Weacombe, an enchantingly lovely valley jewelled with a tiny lake, lies within a short distance of Bicknoller, on the way to St. Audries.

At the seaward end of the Quantocks the glorious combination of wooded hills, heather-clad moors, and cliff-bound sea-shore is one which never fails in its appeal, however often it may be re-visited, and here again history lends natural beauty an even greater charm. Though the old-world hamlets and gracious manor houses of this corner of Quantoxland could be found nowhere else but in England, the scenery in which they are set has colouring so vivid that it seems more like some sunnier land. Not even the famous red cliffs of Devon are more brilliant than the red cliffs which edge the sea-shore of the Quantocks, and only Ireland could match the vivid emerald of the hills, whilst there is a rich and ever-changing succession of wild flowers carpeting the fields and woods, and starring the hedgerows, from the daffodils of early spring to the purple blaze of heather in the autumn.

Picturesque Doniford, a tiny hamlet of considerable antiquity, was for centuries the home of the family of Hewish, who settled there in the reign of Edward III. Among its more notable members was Alexander Hewish, one of the editors of the famous Polyglot Bible, who was esteemed " one of the most considerable men in Europe in all parts of learning." West Quantoxhead village has of late years become more generally known as St. Audries, from the beautiful mansion and church built by Sir Alexander Acland Hood, grandfather of the present Lord St. Audries. The bay of St. Audries, bounded by red cliffs and shady woodlands, is one of the loveliest stretches of the Somerset coast, with the finest bathing beach in the district, and a wonderful view westward to Minehead. It has recently been opened to the public with the establishment of a holiday camp which, fortunately, is being run on lines which do not detract from the quiet charm of its surroundings. It is a place where all the delights of an open-air holiday can be enjoyed without any of the discomforts usually associated with camp life. The attractive chalets are grouped on the cliffs above the bay in a little settlement which blends unobtrusively with its background of woods and hills. Within a mile or two of West Quantoxhead the road drops down to the even more delightful village of East Quantoxhead —a hamlet so calm, so dignified, and so essentially mediæval in atmosphere that it seems to have been transported bodily from the Norman era into the present day. Much of this sense of the past is due to the grand old Court House, which is not only one of the finest and most intimate links with the past to be found in England, but is still inhabited by a direct descendant of its original Norman lord, to whom it was granted at the time of the Conquest, for the Luttrells of Dunster Castle have been lords of East Quantoxhead for nearly a thousand years.

Half Norman castle and half manor house, this splendid building has, among other relics of its antiquity, thick oaken doors and beams, a cock-pit, a plough of primitive design,

View from West Quantoxhead, St. Audries

Holford.

Kilve
Priory.

and a fossilised lamb's heart stuck over with pins, which hangs above the vast fireplace in the kitchen in memory of its efficacy when used many generations ago to break a witch's curse. The church, though small, is exceptionally interesting, and contains among other notable features a splendid 15th century tomb to Hugh Luttrell. A duck-pond between the ancient church and the rose-decked wall of the manor gardens adds to the infinite charm of this adorable little hamlet.

Town's End, a whitewashed house bowered in roses and honeysuckle, stands beside the main road at the end of the lane leading from East Quantoxhead. It was here that Laurence Irving spent his honeymoon, and was paid a visit by Sir Henry Irving during his stay. A path through the Combe known variously as Smith's or Danes, runs from Town's End to Fire Beacon, the highest point at this end of the Quantock Range.

In olden times Kilve, which is strung out beside a lane running between the main road to Bridgwater and the seashore, was a great haunt of smugglers. Its church is a little white building with a low tower, and has a plain Norman font. The remains of a small chapel founded in 1329 stand nearby, and it is believed that its partial destruction by fire about a hundred years ago was due to the ignition of smuggled spirits hidden there. Kilve was one of the few places in the Quantocks which Wordsworth mentioned by name in his verses, and also figures in Southey's poems.

The people of Kilve indulge in the old local sport of " glatting " or " conger-eeling "—a pastime which is more thrilling than the uninitiated imagine, particularly when dogs are used. This form of hunting is peculiar to the seaward end of the Quantocks, and a good " fish dog "—usually a terrier or spaniel—is a very coveted possession in that neighbourhood.

It is but a short distance from Kilve to Holford, a charming little village with a picturesque church, near the entrance to two of the loveliest combes of the Quantocks—Holford, or Hodder's Combe, and Tannery, or Butterfly Combe.

Hodder's Combe derives its name from Alfred the Great's powerful adherent, Earl Odda. A fallen menhir on Longstone Hill points the way to the hearth of an ancient beacon where tradition tells that Odda signalled with beacon fires to the men of Wiltshire whilst Alfred was hiding in Athelney. A curiously convincing fact in support of the tradition is that it is the only place near Athelney where a beacon fire can signal to Long-down in Wiltshire without being seen from the Polden Hills, where Alfred's Danish enemies were gathered.

The famous Holford beeches are magnificent trees, and both Holford and Butterfly Combe are rich in wild flowers, especially water forget-me-nots, which lie in great patches of misty blue, like still pools of water in the sunshine. A line of especially noble beech trees shades the road to Alfoxden Manor, which Wordsworth rented in 1797 for the absurdly low sum of £23. Here the poet lived with his sister Dorothy, and wrote the poems which appeared in his "Lyrical Ballads." Curiously enough, although he embodied descriptions of Quantock scenery, and references to local incidents, in a number of his poems, he seldom refers to the hills and their villages by name, yet both he and his sister wrote many letters which testify to their enjoyment of life in this enchanting countryside, where they found such congenial company with Coleridge, Southey, and Thomas Poole at Nether Stowey, and were visited by Hazlitt, Thelwall, and Charles Lamb. Probably Wordsworth would have stayed longer, but the visit of Thelwall the republican drew the suspicions of the Government on the little group of friends, and the habit of rambling in all weathers indulged in by Wordsworth and his sister was considered so extraordinary that the owner of the house refused to renew the lease. The charming Queen Anne Mansion is now an hotel, and among the many interesting places in the neighbourhood are Stringston, Kilton and Dodington.

Stringston Church, with its whitewashed tower and red-tiled spire, has a curiously Continental look in this intensely

odington
all,
81
replace.

Doding
Hall.

he Gazebo,
ether Stowey.

Coleridge's
Cottage,
Nether Stowey.

English setting. There is an exceptionally beautiful late 14th century cross in the churchyard. One of the roads from Stringston to Kilton climbs Kilton Hill and commands a magnificent view of the whole range of the Quantocks. Kilton church, though restored, contains an ancient font and some fine brasses. Dodington, a delightful little village with a weather-beaten church, hidden away in wooded hills near the Elizabethan manor-house of Dodington Court, is one of the most secluded of all the Quantock villages. The Manor-house is now a farm, but it retains all the beauty and interest of its great days. The Dodingtons held the manor from the 12th century, and the house is filled with memories of their rule, one of the most curious incidents being the knighting by Charles I of Christopher Dodington, when an infant in his cradle.

Nether Stowey lies two miles along the Bridgwater road from Alfoxton, and is by far the largest place on the Quantocks. It is a pleasantly picturesque village where historical and literary associations strive in friendly rivalry in their claim upon the interest of visitors. The cottage of Coleridge is now carefully preserved by the National Trust, and that of his friend Thomas Poole also survives. Coleridge lived in Nether Stowey from 1797 to 1800, having settled there partly to enjoy the companionship of Thomas Poole, and partly to find time for his studies and writing. During his time here Coleridge wrote "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," and although in a fit of depression he described his Nether Stowey home as a "miserable hovel," on other occasions he mentioned it with affection, and certainly spent some of the happiest years of his life there.

The house in which Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, the composer, lived is also to be seen.

Coleridge's friend Poole was in many ways a remarkable man. Though denied a scholar's education, he was so determined to gain knowledge that he taught himself Latin, French, and Literature, and won the friendship of some of the greatest literary giants of his day. His great good sense

and wisdom had an excellent effect on Coleridge's volatile temperament. After the departure of the poets, he stayed on in the village, beloved by everyone, until his death in 1837, and is still remembered for his benefactions, which included the founding of Stowey Women's Club in 1807, one of the earliest of these Clubs to be established in England, and still one of the most flourishing.

The interest and fame of the " Nether Stowey Brotherhood " was Somerset's greatest literary distinction, and its members had the greatest possible influence on eighteenth century literature, but Nether Stowey is scarcely less interesting for its historical associations, and its charm as a touring centre. On Castle Hill there are the remains of a Norman Castle, which was dismantled to provide material for the 15th century manor house near the church. The original builder, Lord Audley, never lived to see the mansion completed, for he was beheaded for his share in the rebellion of Perkin Warbeck, but it was completed by his successor, and was garrisoned for the King during the Civil War. The grounds contain fishponds and an often-photographed gazebo.

The chief interest of the church is the tablet to Thomas Poole, whose tomb is in the churchyard, but the vicarage has associations with three men who achieved fame : two vicars became Bishops, and another befriended Robert Parsons, who afterwards became one of the most famous Jesuit intriguers of the 16th century. A local scandal averred that " Parsons," who was known to be illegitimate, was actually the son of the Vicar who befriended him. His efforts to convert England to Roman Catholicism were attended by many hairbreadth escapes in a variety of disguises.

Chief among the many places of interest which can be visited from Nether Stowey is Stogursey, or, more properly, Stoke Courcy, which originally belonged to the Norman family of Falaise, but at some unrecorded time before the reign of Henry II passed into the possession of the De Courcy family from whom it derives its name. It was from here that the great warrior, John de Courcy, set out for Ireland,

conquered Ulster, and became its first Earl, subsequently being imprisoned by King John for upholding the cause of Prince Arthur of Brittany.

Stogursey and its near neighbourhood is rich in antiquities. A tumulus at Wick, when opened, revealed relics of the Bronze Age and the Roman Occupation; the village cross of Stogursey is believed to mark the place of baptism of the Saxon dwellers in the village; the remains of the once-powerful castle and the magnificently-preserved parish church link the village with Norman and later periods, and an ancient bell on some almshouses is said to have been rung at six, morning and evening, every day since the reign of Henry V. Stogursey Castle was destroyed in 1457 during the Wars of the Roses, but there are still some interesting fragments to be seen. The church contains a 13th century tomb to Sir Ralph Verney, and one to Sir John Verney who died in 1461.

Within easy reach of Stogursey is Shurston, an adorably pretty place where the houses are built on bridges over a little stream; Fairfield, a large Elizabethan mansion, which belonged to the Verneys, and Fiddington, a delightful village grouped round the church and duck-pond.

Over Stowey, the sister village of Nether Stowey, also has links with the "Brotherhood," for it was at Marsh Mills, a house which still stands, that Thomas Poole's cousin, John Poole, lived. He was a Fellow of Oriel College, and afterwards became rector of the pretty little church of Enmore, a few miles from Over Stowey. It was at Marsh Mills that Southey first heard of the death of Robespierre, and vied with Coleridge in expressing the most extravagant republican sentiments, to the great scandal of their Somerset friends. Over Stowey church is small and pleasant, with good carved bench ends and windows of coloured glass from designs by Burne-Jones. Among the delightful rambles in the neighbourhood of Over Stowey are those to the enchanting Cockercombe and Seven Wells Combe; Danesborough, or Dowsborough Hill, which is crowned by a fine tumulus; and

to the villages of Aisholt, which has one of the smallest and most interesting churches in Quantoxland; Adscombe and the ruin of the ancient Adscombe Chapel; and Spaxton. The church of Spaxton is very fine, having some richly carved bench-ends, and a 14th century tomb with the effigies of a knight and lady. There is also a beautiful 14th century canopied cross with an elaborately carved head in the churchyard.

Cannington, which lies halfway between Nether Stowey and Bridgwater, is a large village which is not only a good centre for the remote villages in the northern foothills of the Quantocks, but is itself of interest as the birthplace in 1584, of John Pym, whose home—Brymore House—is still standing. The church has some unusual features, and the whole village is filled with interesting antiquities. The Roman Catholic Industrial School was once the Courthouse belonging to the de Clifford family. Gurney Street Farm is an old manor-house which preserves among other notable features a tiny domestic chapel and priest's chamber, and Blackmoor Farm is a similarly interesting survival. There was once a nunnery at Cannington, founded in 1138, of which nothing but a low wall remains. It is said that "Fair Rosamund," who was beloved by Henry II, was born at Cannington and spent her early youth in the Nunnery. Though no actual proof of this exists, the fact that her family—the de Cliffords—had property at Cannington, gives some colour to the tradition, and invests the village with an added interest.

A road from Cannington leads in a delightfully inconsequential, roundabout way through the rich meadows and woodlands of the Quantock foothills to Combwich, Stolford, and the remote villages of the seashore. At Stolford, a small mission chapel replaces the ancient chapel of St. Michael, and from there the coast stretches eastward in a long tongue of fertile pastureland to the mouth of the Parratt and its impassable tidal waters, where the nearest ferry is at Combwich, and even this is only available at certain states of the

Stogursey

Over Stowey.

urleigh
anor, A.D.1500

tide. The only road eastward out of Quantoxland is the bridge at Bridgwater. Stert, on the remotest point of this lonely pastureland, is a quaint, isolated village which has boats and sledges of a curious type only found in this locality.

Charlynch, once the home of Sir Robert Crosse, the Companion-in-Arms of Drake ; the mediæval manor-house of Gothelney ; and the ancient manor of Durleigh which was the birthplace and early home of Jane Seymour, one of the wives of Henry VIII, are all in the near neighbourhood of Cannington.

At the eastward end of the Quantocks there are gathered some of its fairest villages and manor-houses, easily reached from either Taunton or Bridgwater. The road between the latter town and North Petherton is especially charming, and crowned with the final beauty of the quiet little village and its splendid church. Less than half a mile away is the scarcely less lovely village of North Newton, whose church tower is reputed to be the oldest in Somerset, many believing it to date from the time of Alfred. It was in this parish that the famous " Alfred Jewel " was discovered in 1693. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford.

Goathurst and Halswell House are also in this neighbourhood. The mansion was originally built in the Tudor period, but was partly re-built in 1639. It is a singularly lovely place in an exquisitely beautiful setting, and is the ancient home of the Tynte family, who are said to have taken their name from the motto, " *Tinctus cruore Saraceno* " granted by Richard Cœur-de-Lion to a young knight of the noble house of Arundel, who, clad all in white, fought at the battle of Ascalon " as a lion, doing deeds equal to any six crusaders." Goathurst Church contains the tombs of the Tyntes, and a great 17th century monument to Sir Nicholas Halswell and his wife, surrounded by the kneeling figures of their nine children.

Nearer to Taunton is Kingston St. Mary, lying in a valley which is glorious in spring with apple-blossom, for the

orchards here yield the finest cider-apples in Somerset. The village is of considerable antiquity, with a fine church containing some richly-carved bench-ends and a tomb to one of the Warres of the neighbouring mansion of Hestercombe. The present mansion is chiefly modern, but incorporates some parts of the earlier building, and its present owners cherish as a family heirloom a sword taken from King John of France by John de la Warre at the Battle of Poictiers. In the near neighbourhood of Kingston are Broomfield with its interesting church and 13th century cross ; Fyne Court, once the home of Philosopher Crosse, whose experiments in chemistry brought him notoriety ; Holwell Cavern with its stalactites and stalagmites, which is not now open to the general public owing to the depredations of visitors in previous years ; and Ruborough Camp, a Roman entrenchment, enclosing 27 acres, of an unusual triangular shape. Lyng with its tiny church, and many other delightful villages, are within easy walking distance of the county town.

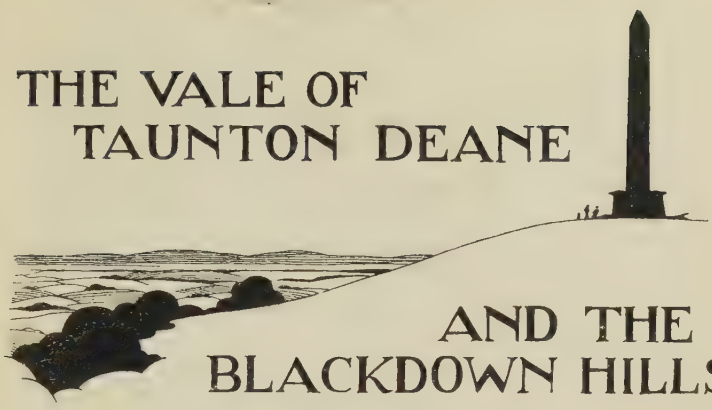
In no part of England is history a more living, vital thing than in Quantoxland, where the thrilling stories of battles which took place a thousand years ago, and the romances and scandals of as far back as the sixteenth century, are remembered, retold and commented upon by the villagers with as much zest and wealth of detail as though they were of recent occurrence—tales handed down by word of mouth with a surprising accuracy, which have been confirmed by the discovery of contemporary records unknown to the villagers who have kept these fascinating tales alive. Stories of the Danish invasion, confirmed by archæological research ; legends of saints and dragons ; grim tales of witches and ghosts ; and traditions which have their origin in pagan customs—all are the current knowledge of Quantoxland, where the belief in pixies and white witches is as firm to-day as in the Middle Ages. It is a fascinating treasure-house of folk-lore and legend in an incomparably lovely setting.

The Wise and Foolish Virgins
on Carved Vestry Door,
North Newton Church.

Portion of Carved Screen,
showing the Plough,
Norton Fitzwarren Church.

North Street,
Taunton.

THE VALE OF TAUNTON DEANE AND THE BLACKDOWN HILLS



CHAPTER IV

The countryside of the Vale of Taunton Deane is essentially serene and contented. It has the rich fertility which makes for an opulent pastoral beauty. Cows graze knee-deep in lush grass tangled with delicate wild flowers. Hedges bloom with hawthorn, dog-roses and honey-suckle, or glow with berries. Orchards are fragrantly lovely with blossom-laden boughs or heavy with ripe fruit, and nightingales sing in the coppices. Mellow old farmhouses and sturdy cottages are trim and picturesque, reflecting the prosperity of their owners, and everywhere there is happy laughter and a rich contentment.

Cradled in the shelter of the Blackdowns, Brendons and Quantocks, and watered by the placid river Tone, the Vale hides in its heart the delightful old county town of Taunton. Founded by King Ina of Wessex in 720, probably as a small fortress to defend and mark the western limits of his conquests, it retains to an extraordinary degree the Saxon atmosphere, for even in modern times it is essentially an agricultural town, and the chief outlet for the rich produce of the Vale. It suggests the sturdy independence, and placid love of simple yet ample comfort which was so marked a characteristic of its Saxon founders, and is one of the

friendliest and most lovable towns in the Kingdom, welcoming the visitor and tourist, and pouring its offerings at their feet with all the traditional hospitality of the Saxon.

Taunton's history, beginning in the Saxon era with warfare and destruction, was curiously uneventful during the Norman period, and right up to the 15th century. Perkin Warbeck was the first disturber of this peace when, in 1497, he seized the town. Shortly afterwards he fled before the approach of the royal army, but was brought back a prisoner on the arrival of Henry VII in the town. It was not until the Civil War that the town saw bloodshed, but then, within half-a-century, there was crammed sufficient acts of heroism and tragic horror to make up for the centuries of tranquillity. Blake's brilliant defence of Taunton against Royalist troops was one of the most stirring events of the Civil War. Forty years later the town acclaimed Monmouth as King and subsequently suffered untold horrors of retribution at the hands of Judge Jeffreys and Colonel Kirke.

Taunton's spacious streets seem to the casual visitor so entirely modern that it is all too frequently said Taunton has but scanty relics of her past history—but those who learn to know Taunton realise that the town has much to link it with the most notable events of its long existence, chief among its mediæval survivals being, of course, Taunton Castle.

The earliest part of the Castle dates from the 12th century, though the greater part to-day is Edwardian, with many traces of reconstructions made in the time of Henry VII. Though part of the outer ward has been spoiled by the invasion of modern buildings, there is still much to interest the visitor, for the Somerset Archæological Society, who use the castle as a Museum, have done a great deal to restore the building to its original appearance. The castle was the focal point of Blake's heroic defence of Taunton, and the infamous "Bloody Assizes" which followed the Monmouth Rebellion, were held by Judge Jeffreys in the Great Hall, which still stands.

Taunton has two ancient churches—St. Mary Magdalene, which has a richly ornamented tower unequalled in England,

Castle Bow, Taunton.

Taunton Castle.

and a correspondingly beautiful interior, and St. James's, which dates from the 15th century and has a 17th century pulpit and a finely carved font.

There is a rather dilapidated, but still interesting, Barn surviving from the 12th century Priory, and the charming Vivary Park marks the site of the monastic fishponds. A picturesque row of thatched almshouses was originally a mediæval leper hospital, and still bears the arms of the founder, Abbot Bere of Glastonbury. Two rows of old-world almshouses date from the 16th century ; the ancient Grammar School, now incorporated with the Municipal buildings ; and two fine half-timbered houses in the Market Place, survive untouched. The White Hart Inn, where Kirke stayed after Monmouth's Rebellion, though altered to a certain extent to meet modern commercial requirements, is still standing, and a quaint packhorse bridge is mediæval, though some people claim that the roadway it carries across the river is a Roman causeway.

Taunton is an incomparable touring centre. Apart from the fact that its central position makes it ideal for exploring every part of Somerset, the whole neighbourhood is a constant delight. There is many a pleasant village in the Vale, which is haunted by more nightingales than any other place in Somerset, and is rich with the glory of wild flowers, golden corn, and rosy ripe apples, each in their season—and the whole Vale is honeycombed with highways and byways leading from Taunton to the delightful towns and villages of the Vale.

One of these roads leads directly to Bishop's Lydeard, a lovely village clustering round a fine old church. The tower of this church was probably the first of all the famous West Somerset towers to rise in the Vale, and is a noble and beautiful piece of work. The interior of the church is especially rich in carved wood, with a magnificent screen and carved bench-ends which depict scenes in hunting and venery, and men of various trades with symbols of their profession. The Churchyard cross is an unrivalled example

of 14th century work which not only has beautiful carved figures on the shaft, but is unique in the ornamentation of the socket, which has fine bas-reliefs on each of its eight faces. The remains of another interesting cross, which formerly stood in the village, are also to be found in the churchyard.

The road to Wiveliscombe passes through Norton Fitzwarren, which lies under a dark hill crowned with a thirteen-acre British Camp. There is a tradition in the neighbourhood that a fiery dragon used to issue from the camp and lay waste the Vale, which is believed by archæologists to typify the British raids on the Saxons of the Vale. Norton Fitzwarren church dates from the 14th century, though largely rebuilt. The screenwork is exceptionally beautiful and incorporates a name—probably the donor's—and the date 1509. Its carvings include a ploughman and his team and some dragons, probably in reference to the local legend. Norton Fitzwarren is said to be a place of great antiquity, and a local couplet claims :

" When Taunton was a furzy down
Norton was a market town."

Also on the Wiveliscombe road are Heathfield, which has a small church with a 16th century mural monument, a carved oak pulpit, and a 13th century sculptured cross in the churchyard, and Milverton, a small town at the extreme west end of the Vale. Milverton is an old-fashioned little place with steep streets, backed by the Brendons and overlooking the smiling Vale. It has a fine church, built on a curious plan, which is well worth seeing. There are some beautiful bench-ends and choir stalls of early 16th century work, and a Norman font. Even more interesting is the Vicarage house, a perfect example of a small house built about 1500. It is said to have been built by Cardinal Wolsey, though there is no documentary support for this belief. Two natives of Milverton achieved fame—the fiery John of Milverton, born in 1480, who attacked the doctrines of Wycliffe, and Dr. Thomas Young, born three hundred years later, who unravelled the secret of the Rosetta Stone, and also established the undulatory theory of light.

Wiveliscombe is a typical country town, built partly on the lower slopes of the Brendons and partly in the Vale. The church was completely rebuilt in 1829, and the only relics of the ancient church are the rather dilapidated 17th century effigies of Humphrey Wyndham and his wife, and the worn shaft of a cross in the churchyard showing the half-obliterated figure of a bishop. South of the church are the scanty traces of a Bishop's palace built by John Drokensford in the 14th century. The Castles, an encampment where Roman coins were found, lies three miles south of Wiveliscombe, near the village of Bathealton. The road from Wiveliscombe to Dulverton passes the hamlet of Waterrow, which is charmingly situated near the lofty hills from which the River Tone emerges through a wooded rift.

Though Wiveliscombe is now so tranquil, it has had a long history, and was probably a place of note in the Roman era, though not a military post. Formerly a Crown possession, the manor was granted by Edward the Confessor to the See of Wells, and held by them until Elizabeth compelled Bishop Godwin to give it to her favourite, Raleigh, as a punishment for the Bishop's " crime " of having married. Bittiscombe Court, whose grounds are open to the public in June, is nearby, and Halse is within a few miles. This pleasant village commands an enchanting view of the Quantocks. The church has a rood screen which is a rich example of early 16th century work, some fine Flemish glass dated 1548, and other interesting features. Fitzhead, about a mile west of Halse, also has a fine rood screen in the church, and is neighboured by the ancient manor-house of Fitzhead Court.

The road to Wellington runs through Bishop's Hull, whose church is a ghastly example of the worst efforts of the " restorer," but contains a fine Jacobean monument to Sir J. Farwell ; effigies of his three grandchildren ; and many good bench-ends. The Elizabethan mansion of the Farwells, built in the form of an E, stands beside the main road, from which Bradford church can also be seen in the distance. The village stands beside the River Tone, and the bridge carrying

the Milverton road over the river probably dates from the 13th century. The church contains an effigy of a knight of the time of Richard II, and a Norman base to the font.

Wellington is a quiet and pleasant town which retains a charming individuality of its own. Though only the church can boast any age, its buildings have a dignity which hints at the long history of the town, and even the most up-to-date shops and houses are linked by their site with memories of the past. The lovely old church, which dates chiefly from the 15th century, though incorporating 13th and 14th century work, has a magnificent early 17th century monument to Sir John Popham, Lord Chief Justice of England, who lived in a house whose site is now occupied by Old Court.

The earliest documentary reference to Wellington occurs in the reign of Alfred, and its history from then on is of much interest, though overshadowed by the events of the Civil War and Monmouth's Rebellion. The town was first brought into prominence in 1640 by the death of Lieutenant Compton Eure, who was resting with his Company at Wellington. The Lieutenant absenting himself from church on Sunday, he was put down as a papist and brutally murdered by his men, who dragged his body through the streets and assaulted the friends who tried to save his life. The Company, aware that retribution was likely to overtake them, dispersed immediately afterwards, and a Proclamation was issued for bringing them to justice.

Wellington's part in the Civil War centred chiefly round Sir John Popham's house, which was seized for Parliament by Colonel Bovet. The garrison was attacked by the Royalist forces under Sir Richard Grenville, who levelled the house almost to the ground.

During the Monmouth Rebellion the Duke of Albemarle, in command of a muster of Royalist militia, took up his position at Wellington, and his correspondence with Monmouth was dated from that town. Wellington is also mentioned in Fielding's account of the Rebellion in the story of " The Old Man of the Hill," which is told in his

Bench End,
Milverton.

"The Resurrection,"
Bench End,
Bishop's Hull.

The Screen,
Halse Church.

novel "Tom Jones." Following the final defeat of Monmouth, Judge Jeffreys stayed at an inn on the site of the present day White Hart Inn. Three Wellington men were hanged in a shed on a site now occupied by a motor and cycle shop, and others of the town also suffered death or the pillory for their share in the rebellion. There is also preserved in the town the sword of Mary Bridges, a young girl of eleven or twelve years of age, who stabbed a soldier to the heart for insulting her mother, immediately after the Battle of Sedgemoor. She was tried by court-martial before Colonel Kirke and, most surprisingly in view of his record for cruelty, was honourably acquitted and presented with the sword as an heirloom.

Daniel Defoe mentions Wellington—not very flatteringly—in his "Tour through England," published in 1724.

Constant speculation has failed to reveal any reason why the great Duke of Wellington should have chosen to take his title from this little Somersetshire town, for he does not appear to have visited it until some years after he acquired the Manorial rights, but Wellingtonians were duly gratified by his choice, and in 1815 held a meeting and invited subscriptions to raise a monument on the highest point of Blackdown, near the town. Although the original elaborate scheme was not carried out, the monument itself was erected, its triangular shape representing the old Waterloo bayonet. The height has twice been increased, and the monument is now 175 ft. high, and can be ascended by a spiral staircase in the interior. There are wonderful views from the summit of the monument, which is a noted landmark for miles around, and the foot of the column is a favourite place for picnics.

Wellington is a charming and healthy residential centre with a delightful Public Park, and a big sports ground. Wellington College is one of the best-equipped public schools in the West Country. The town lies within a few miles of the county boundary, and can be made the headquarters for many places of interest in Somerset and Devon, among the

most interesting Somersetshire villages in the neighbourhood being Nynehead and Langford Budville.

Nynehead church is a show place, containing a remarkable and totally unexpected collection of marble statuary and Della Robbia work, comprising a miniature art gallery of brightly coloured statuary very unusual in England. The church is Perpendicular, though largely rebuilt, and also contains a fine oak screen. Nynehead Court stands near the Church, and was visited by Gainsborough, who painted on the east wall of the church during his visit.

Langford Budville until recently used to celebrate an ancient custom on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, when the villagers met in the churchyard and formed a ring round the church. When the ring broke two leaders "went straight to the wall," and were followed by all the others, finally giving three shouts to frighten the devil away to a neighbouring village—an unneighbourly custom which was at one time also followed at Wellington. The church is chiefly interesting for the needle and thread carved at the bottom of one of the capitals in the south arcade. The local explanation is that the church must have been built by a woman, but more probably it is due to some connection with Queen's College, Oxford, where there is maintained a centuries' old ceremonious presentation of a needle and thread to each Fellow and undergraduate in lodgings, on New Year's Day, under a bequest of the founder.

There are also some beautiful manor-houses near Wellington, chief of which is Cotehay, a glorious old place which is one of the best examples of early Tudor work in this part of Somerset, with gables and mullioned windows, a Great Hall, minstrels' gallery, and much fine oak panelling, set in a garden which slopes down to the River Tone. Cotehay was the old home of the Bluett family, who had another mansion about a mile away, known as Greenham Barton, which dates partly from the 14th century and partly from the time of Henry VIII, and was reputed to be linked with Cotehay by an underground passage. Chipley Park, where

Nynehead Hollow,
Wellington.

The Monument, Wellington

Locke wrote part of his " Essay on Human Understanding " whilst staying with the Clarkes, has a splendid avenue of lime trees, and at West Buckland is the beautiful Jacobean manor of Gerbestone.

The road from Taunton to Honiton passes through or near several interesting little villages. Wilton has a church of considerable antiquity, which was enlarged in 1838. The well near the church was a noted place of pilgrimage in bygone centuries.

Trull church probably has the finest ancient oak fittings of any church in West Somerset—no small distinction in a county where the remotest churches are rich in woodwork. The earliest part of the building dates from the 13th century, but the greater part is of 15th century work. The carved wood includes a screen, bench-ends dated 1510, and a pulpit which is unrivalled. The village stocks are to be found in the churchyard, under a tree. Within easy reach of Trull are Pitminster, a place of considerable charm with a church containing monuments to the Cole family ; Corfe, which lies in woodlands at the foot of the Blackdowns ; and Angersleigh which also lies at the foot of the Blackdowns in enchantingly lovely scenery. The church is very small and was probably originally Decorated, but was altered in the Perpendicular period.

Staple Fitzpane, a pretty village clustering round a church with a noble tower and a Norman doorway, and Combe St. Nicholas, which has a spacious Perpendicular church with traces of the original Norman building, are the only places of special importance on the Chard road, but delightful lanes branch off to Orchard Portman, and Thurlbear, both of which have small but interesting churches and both of which have streams in the neighbourhood with the curious power of petrifying wood and other materials. Curland lies at the foot of the hill crowned by Castle Neroche. Bickenhall can be reached from Staple Fitzpane. It has a modern church incorporating the font and a quaint monument from the original building. The inscription on the monument is now defaced, but Collinson, the

18th century historian, saw it and recorded that it was to Rachel Portman, who died in 1642.

The Ilminster road passes some especially delightful villages. First Ruiston, with its massive church tower and traces of Norman work, then the by-ways to Creech St. Michael and Thornfalcon. Creech St. Michael is set on the banks of the Tone, and has a splendid church, chiefly of 12th century work, with a 16th century monument. The village stocks stand in the churchyard under two great yew trees, and there is an ancient house, now a farm, nearby. Thornfalcon has a Perpendicular church with good bench-ends dated 1542, and is set in enchanting woodlands which are a special haunt of nightingales.

West Hatch and Hatch Beauchamp lie in the shelter of thickly wooded hills. There is a tradition that an ancient camp existed at a place called Belmont on the Hatch Court estate, which was occupied by a lady of renowned beauty, from whence the village derived the name of " Beauchamp," but a more prosaic explanation is that it derived its name from its Norman lords, the Beauchamps. The church at Hatch Beauchamp lies in the deer park of Hatch Court, and though a fine old building with some good bench-ends and ancient glass, has its chief interest centred in the grave of Colonel Chard, the hero of Rorke's Drift. There was formerly an old cross in the churchyard, but a local squire of the 18th century, having lost a servant whose memory he wished to perpetuate, had it converted into an obelisk—and perpetuated his servant's memory more surely than he realised !

From the Langport road the whole of the curiously-named " Curry Country "—probably derived from " Curig," a Celtic Saint ; the no less quaintly named Isle Brewers and Isle Abbots ; and the famous Isle of Athelney, are reached, but although within such easy reach of Taunton, and frequently included in descriptions of the Vale, the scenery and characteristics of the district are far more akin to those of Sedgemoor to which they really belong, than to the sylvan Vale of Taunton Deane.

Portion of Screen,
Nynehead Church.

Trull Church,
(1510) Woodwork.

THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

Although most guide books mention the Blackdown range with great frequency, as being visible from the heights of the Mendips, Poldens, Quantocks and Brendons, they usually dismiss the range itself after describing the Wellington Monument and Castle Neroche, though there are some interesting and exceedingly picturesque little villages in this comparatively short range of hills. The natural and delightful result is that here, above all, it is possible to "wander lonely as a cloud." There are no chars-a-bancs to disturb their ancient peace, and never having been invaded by bands of tourists, their villages are as unselfconscious as they are lovely in their rural simplicity, and the villagers themselves cherish their ancient beliefs and customs, unhampered by overmuch contact with the sceptical modern world. In the height of August the hills are as quiet and serene as in the depth of winter—a real haven of refuge for those in search of a healing peace.

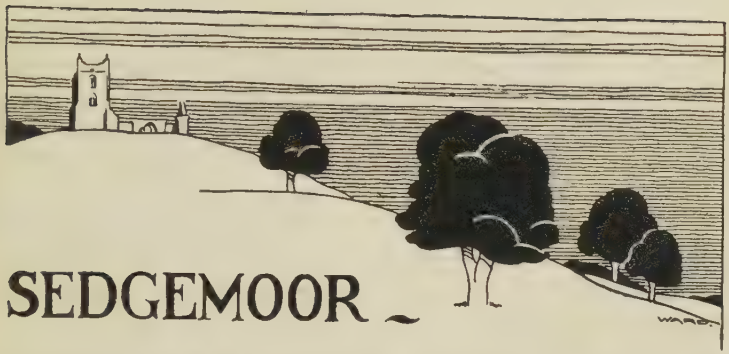
One of the chief difficulties of dealing with the Blackdowns is that owing to the fact that the range merges into a group of unnamed hills in the neighbourhood of Chard, few, if any, books on the district give a satisfactory definition of the limits of the range. In actual fact, the term "Hills" is misleading. The true Blackdown range is a ridge extending approximately from Wellington Hill to Castle Neroche, with a roadway running along the crest to link the two. A great portion of the southern slopes of the range is in Devonshire, though the boundary is very irregular, taking a great curve southward near Buckland St. Mary. The best centres for exploring the Blackdowns are Wellington, which lies $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Wellington Hill, and Chard, which is a few miles from the eastern face of the range.

Apart from their remoteness from the bustle of modern life, the charm of these hills lies in their woods and the wonderful views across the fair counties of Somerset and Devon. Not even the Quantocks are more thickly wooded than the Blackdowns, with their masses of fir-trees and

mountain-ash, and these woods hide some delightful river valleys, in addition to the interesting Blackdown villages, chief of which are Otterford, which lies in a broad valley watered by the gay little Otter brook and is dominated by the church set on a neighbouring hill-top, and Whitestaunton, hidden among the hills and hard to reach, but well worth the trouble of finding. Whitestaunton is a fascinating place, with a gracious old church and an ancient manor-house, so close together that from some viewpoints they seem one building. The church has several curious features, and possesses some old plate and two pre-Reformation bells. The manor house was originally built in the 15th century, but was altered and beautified a hundred years later. There is a healing well, which was probably used by the Romans, in a secluded nook beside the church, and a Roman villa was discovered in 1845 in the grounds of the manor-house. Although the excavations have not revealed the whole plan, enough has been found to show it was a luxurious place with baths, hypocausts, mosaic floors and frescoed walls. Traces of Roman mining operations found on the hillside above the village have led to a suggestion that the villa may have belonged to an engineer in charge of the mines. The pavement of another Roman villa has also been discovered at Higher Wadeford, nearby, and within a mile or two of Whitestaunton is a fine old sixteenth century house, now known as Weston Farm.

Buckland St. Mary, high on the summit of the Blackdowns, commands delightful views of the Vale of Taunton Deane and a sunlit Devon valley.

Castle Neroche, popularly called Castle Ratch, is an earth work of very great strength, and was mainly used, and most probably constructed, by the Normans. It crowns a steep wooded hill above Curland, and consists of a rather complicated series of embankments and ditches guarding a mound overlooking the fair Vale of Taunton Deane. It is considered improbable that the road between the Camp and the Wellington Monument is one of the ancient trackways.



SEDGEMOOR AND THE POLDEN HILLS

CHAPTER V.

The majority of people, in speaking of Sedgemoor, mean that part of it which lies between the Parrett and the Polden Hills, which is known as King's Sedgemoor, but there is an equally great and characteristic district known as West Sedgemoor south of the Parrett, and a plain between the Poldens and the Mendips known as East Sedgemoor, which merges into the Burnham Level. All this district was once covered by the sea, and each town and village is set on some hill or ridge rising out of the plain—the name of Isle still surviving in many places to show how our remote ancestors found a site for their villages and monasteries in the great waste of waters.

In winter much of this marshland is flooded, even now, and an extraordinarily clear idea of how the great "sea-lake" looked in the days when Alfred hid on the Isle of Athelney can be gained—its mystery and melancholy beauty emphasising the friendliness of its towns and villages.

During the long sunny days of summer Sedgemoor loses its melancholy without impairing its strange fascination. There are people who call Sedgemoor "dreary" at any time of the year, but they are the people who would never feel the charm of the Fen Country or of Holland, which Sedgemoor so much resembles. Unlike the greater part of

England, there are no hedges separating the fields, but "rhines" —great ditches filled with clear water—which shine like long trails of silver ribbon through the day, and turn to burnished gold in the sunset. Sometimes the rhines are edged with a row of pollarded willow trees, and always there is the low, wooded ridge of the Poldens, or the great rampart of the Mendips in sight of the northern moors, or lonely little hills which have seen much history, to break the level of the southern plain.

It is in these moors and their surroundings that Somerset's pageant of war has been concentrated. Here in the Isle of Athelney, Alfred planned his great victory over the Danes. At Langport, Taunton, and Bridgwater were decisive Parliamentarian victories, and on King's Sedgemoor the "Last Battle on English soil" was fought, when the Monmouth rebellion was crushed.

Here, too, the most gracious traditions of the English race are concentrated, for it was at Glastonbury that the first Christian Church in England was built and King Arthur, the half-legendary hero who has inspired the youth of England for centuries with high ideals, was buried. With glorious Wells Cathedral to mark the limit of East Sedgemoor, and the lovely ruins of Muchelney presiding over West Sedgemoor, this vast district can claim an interest, apart from its intrinsic charm, which can hardly be matched by any other district in England.

WEST SEDGEMOOR.

One of the most curious things about West Sedgemoor is the abrupt transition from the wooded hills of the Vale of Taunton Deane to the great plain of Sedgemoor. No amount of studying the map will give any hint of the arbitrary change of scenery, which is so abrupt and so definite that there is no mistaking the fact that one has arrived on Sedgemoor.

The interest of West Sedgemoor is, of course, centred in the Isle of Athelney, where anyone with a spark of spirit will reject the dry theories of some Professors that Alfred did *not* burn the cakes. Common sense and romantic

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se
Old
s,
nelney.

The Abb
Muchelne

Alfred's Stone,
Borough Bridge.

The Mump and ruined
Church, Borough Bridge.

imaginings join issue here to rout the unwelcome theories of the experts. The Alfred jewel with its very definite inscription "Alfred had me made," was found at the northern end of the Isle. Very well then, it is fairly safe to assume that Alfred visited Athelney or he would not have lost his jewel there. He must have been in hiding as the Danes were at that time too powerful for his army to encounter. Very well again: he would not disclose his identity as King to the cottagers with whom he took refuge, and, most convincing of all, he emerged from hiding to achieve his decisive victory at Ethandune, which must have meant considerable planning—and what more probable than that the graciousness which was inherent in Alfred should make him agree to help those who sheltered him by watching their cakes, or that the necessity for planning new moves against the Danes should make him forget the cakes until they burned? Here, as at Glastonbury, joyous legend is more real than proved facts.

The famous Isle, now an oblong mound in an angle between the Tone and the Parrett, is in a lonely district where osiers grow densely, and osier-gathering for the basket industry is the chief means of livelihood for the scanty population. The monastery founded by Alfred at Athelney to commemorate his final victory over the Danes grew to great importance in succeeding centuries, but was utterly destroyed after the Dissolution, leaving no trace above ground. The site is marked by a small stone pillar erected in 1801 to commemorate the Isle's associations with King Alfred. The so-called "Mump," which lies a mile away near Borough Bridge, marks the extremity of the Isle. Obviously artificial, the mound is probably the site of Alfred's fort. It is now crowned by a ruined church which was garrisoned by 120 men during the Civil War, and destroyed during the conflict. An attempt was made to rebuild it in 1724, but it was finally left as it now stands.

South of Athelney is the Curry Country—Curry Moor, North Curry, Curry Rivel, and Curry Mallet—to which St. Curig left his name.

North Curry, far from the beaten track, retains its old-world atmosphere. The Church is chiefly Perpendicular, with a Norman door, a fine Early English base to the tower, and a lovely south porch. There are some interesting effigies, and a slab of marble inscribed with an extraordinarily detailed account of the Reeve's Feast which was instituted to commemorate an act of generosity on the part of King John—a king whose kindly acts were so few that there is little wonder North Curry felt it necessary to put this one on record for ever.

The feast, which fell into desuetude at the end of last century, was held on Boxing Day and commemorated the granting of a charter to hold a market, and the confirming of the Dean and Chapter of Wells in the manorial rights. It was provided by the Reeve, and an effigy of King John was placed on the table to serve as an ornament to an immense mince pie. Leave was given to drink at the Reeve's expense until two candles of one pound weight each were burnt out. Certain tenants known as Jack of Knapp and Jack of Slough were appointed masters of the ceremonies—Knapp is a neighbouring village, and Slough is a moated farm which was formerly a manor-house. All these details, and many more, are recorded in the church.

Within three miles of North Curry is Stoke St. Gregory, once known as East Curry, with a church sufficiently similar to that of its neighbour to suggest a friendly rivalry in their building during the Middle Ages. Its most noteworthy features are a wonderfully carved Jacobean pulpit, an old reading desk converted into the doors of a vestry cupboard, and some bench-ends.

Curry Rivel, or Revel, took its second name from its 12th century lord, Sir Richard Rivel. Its church is Perpendicular, with a lovely 13th century chapel surviving from an earlier building, and some fine monuments. Burton Steeple, which was erected by William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, on the hills west of Curry Rivel to the memory of Sir William Pynsent, is sometimes mistaken for the Wellington Monument, which it resembles at a distance. Pynsent was the

last of an old Somerset family and, conceiving a violent hero-worship for Chatham, left him the fine estate. They had never met, and on the occasions when Pynsent called at Chatham's house to acquaint the Earl with his generous intentions, he was turned away by the servants on account of his disreputable clothes! The mansion, now practically in ruins, was occasionally occupied by Chatham and his Countess. Within a short distance is Swell, which has a tiny church with a Norman doorway and Jacobean chancel furniture, and a fine old mansion known as the Court House. Fivehead, which lies a mile or two away, has a great manor-house now a farm, which was built in 1559 by John Walsh, whose tomb is in Fivehead Church.

Curry Mallet, like Curry Rivel, takes its second name from a Norman lord—one of the same family who owned Shepton Mallet. They had a castle at Curry Mallet of which all traces have vanished. The Church contains a large altar tomb and some curious 17th century wall monuments.

Still further south from the Curry country are the "Isles," which take their name from the river Ile or Isle beside which they are set.

Isle Brewers—its name is a corruption of the De Bruyeres who once owned the manor—is a little village whose church, rebuilt in 1861 but retaining a Norman font, is completely overshadowed by the splendid church of Isle Abbots, once the property of the Abbots of Muchelney. Its double-windowed tower, though small, is one of the loveliest in Somerset—a thing of sheer beauty, exquisite in detail, set among many stately trees. The interior is a blending of Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular styles, and there is a Norman font with primitive carvings.

Muchelney, which lies within two miles of Langport, is a small village rich in antiquities which was once the largest island in these marshes. In A.D. 939 its remoteness recommended it to King Athelstan as a site which offered some prospect of a peaceable existence for the monastery he proposed to found, and from then until the Dissolution

there was a religious house there. Though the church has disappeared with the exception of some foundations and a few tiles found on the site of the Lady Chapel, practically the whole of the 15th century Abbot's house remains—a lovely survival which is now under the care of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments. There is a splendid staircase and doorway, a great fireplace with two lions carved above it, and some scanty remains of old stained glass.

The present church of Muchelney has a fine tower, and the interior has a nave roof painted with angels. Nearby are a delightful old Vicarage House dating from the 14th century, and a modern cross which is almost a facsimile of the ancient cross which stood on the site.

South of Muchelney, on the edge of West Moor, is Kingsbury Episcopi, an ancient village whose splendid church has a fine tower with a richly-carved Norman doorway, whilst between Muchelney and Langport is Huish Episcopi, with a glorious church tower rivalling the finest which Somerset can show in the beauty of its profusion of ornament. The glass in one of the windows is by Burne-Jones and there is a fine pulpit dated 1625.

Langport, like all the ancient towns of Sedgemoor, stands on a hill, near the junction of three Sedgemoor rivers—the Parratt, the Isle and the Ivel. It is one of the quaintest, dearest little towns in Somerset, with a modesty which is a refreshing contrast to tourist-ridden haunts, for though it has much to attract the lover of beautiful things, it pursues its tranquil way undisturbed by any desire for an ephemeral popularity. Set where West Sedgemoor merges into King's Sedgemoor, and surrounded by long, level meadows intersected by wide rhines, it has a very real fascination in the atmosphere characteristic of Sedgemoor—that curiously attractive, indescribable blue haze which invests the moor with its compelling charm.

With three rivers meeting in its neighbourhood, Langport, not unnaturally, has an abnormal number of bridges and waterways—many of them ancient, and all delightfully

Priest House, Muchelney.

"Father Time," Panel of Jacobean Pulpit, Stoke St. Gregory.

picturesque with a curiously foreign air which is suggestive of Holland rather than England. Langport has one unusual and possibly unique mediæval building in a little Perpendicular chapel known as the " Hanging Chapel," built above a great archway spanning the road to Muchelney. Near the gateway is the Church of All Saints, which has an embattled and pinnacled tower, a beautiful East window of ancient glass, a spacious chancel, and a modern window in memory of Bagehot, the historian, who was born at Langport in 1826.

In ancient times a place of the greatest strategical importance, Langport was a " key " position during the Civil War. It was the signal defeat of the Royalist forces at Langport in 1645 which resulted in the fall of Bridgwater, and gave the Parliamentarians their hold over all the West Country. Langport is a centre for all West Sedgemoor and much of King's Sedgemoor, though it has never rivalled Bridgwater as the " capital of the moors."

Aller, where Alfred stood sponsor to Guthrum when the Danish leader and thirty principal men of his Army were baptised after their defeat at Ethandune, lies at the foot of Ham Hill on Aller Moor. In its little church is an ancient font which Edward Hutton in his " Highways and Byways in Somerset " suggests may be the very font in which Guthrum was baptised. There is also an altar tomb with a recumbent effigy dated 1420 in the church. It was at Aller that Fairfax consolidated his victory over the Royalists by capturing the remnants of their forces.

KING'S SEDGEMOOR.

Three of the four villages of King's Sedgemoor are saturated with memories of the Monmouth rebellion, and that disastrous encounter between the valiant, untrained adherents to Monmouth's cause, and the soldiers of the Royalist Army.

Bridgwater, by virtue of its size no less than its position, still the " capital of the moors," was the final rallying point of Monmouth's army before the battle. It is an ancient place

which has seen much history, for it is set on Somerset's chief river at a point navigable by ships of considerable size, and is the only true port of the county. Those to whom the word "port" means a place of huge and not overclean docks may laugh, though not, perhaps, entirely unkindly, at Bridgwater's claim to be a port. The town, pleasantly busy and prosperous though it is, has more the air of a market town, apart from the ships moored along the banks of the Parratt near the Market Place. There is a deceptive atmosphere of leisureliness and an absence of "commercial trappings" which is wholly delightful, and leaves Bridgwater free to interest and charm its visitors with its fine old church, its handful of antiquities, and its memories of Blake and Monmouth.

Nothing remains of the famous castle of Bridgwater but a great stone archway which was part of the watergate. Another ancient doorway is all that remains of Grey Friars, the only Franciscan house in Somerset, and the site of the 13th century Hospital of St. John the Baptist is now occupied by a modern church. The Parish church is a spacious building of red sandstone which, though so harmonious in design, is a blending of various periods, chiefly Perpendicular. Its chief treasure is the great picture of the "Descent from the Cross" which hangs over the altar, and it also contains an unusual amount of wood carving, the choir stalls, screen, pulpit and chancel roof all being of black oak.

There are one or two delightful old houses near the church, and the house in which Blake was born in 1599 is preserved as a museum. Some charming gardens have been laid out beside the river in memory of Bridgwater's famous son, and an unusually attractive statue of the great sailor stands in the market place. The River Parratt has a small "bore"—a curious little tidal wave—which can be seen daily from the Blake Gardens, the view from which incidentally is curiously suggestive of Bayonne in the South of France. The time of the "bore" is advertised daily outside the Town Hall.

At the time of the Civil War Bridgwater Castle was considered impregnable, and its surrender without any attempt

at defence was one of the most disgraceful events of the war, and was an irreparable blow to the Royalist cause. Forty years later the Duke of Monmouth was proclaimed King by the Mayor and Corporation of Bridgwater, and it was from the then still habitable castle that he rode out to Sedgemoor by the street which is now known as "War Lane." The Bridgwater Museum has a Sedgemoor Room, with a model of the battlefield and innumerable relics which greatly add to the interest of a visit to the Battlefield.

The story of that tragic fight and pitiful rout in 1685 has been told too often to need recapitulation. Those who like their history decked out as a novel can find an enthralling account of the whole Rebellion and its aftermath in Conan Doyle's brilliant book "Micah Clarke," and those who prefer their historical detail without digressions from the main point, will find a detailed description in "The Battle of Sedgemoor" by Maurice Page, an enthusiastic and careful student who has collated and sifted all the available evidence in his little handbook.

The battlefield is known as Zoyland—from Zealand, an island—for it is a plain on which are three villages dominated by their respective church towers, which indicated to the Duke the position of his opponents. Feversham with the Royal cavalry lay at Westonzoyland, Pembroke and the Militia at Middlezoy, and a detachment of cavalry under Sir Francis Coryton at Chedzoy.

No church in England has a more direct or more unhappy connection with national history than Westonzoyland, where some five hundred miserable prisoners, wounded and fatigued, were incarcerated after the battle—some dying within the walls whilst the bells rang out for the Royalist victory and others, less fortunate, living to suffer at the brutal hands of Feversham, Kirke, and Judge Jeffreys.

Built in the 15th century by the Abbots of Glastonbury, Westonzoyland church has one of the finest of the great Perpendicular towers for which Somerset is famous, and incorporates 13th and 14th century work from an earlier

church on the site. Unlike so many Somerset churches, this has escaped the fatal hand of the 19th century restorer, and though this necessitates raising a big sum of money in the present day, it is good to know that when the requisite sum has been subscribed, the work will be carried out under expert direction which will not mar its characteristic features.

Chedzoy lies the other side of the battlefield. Its church is noteworthy for several unusual features and some particularly fine wood work. On the west buttress of the south transept are marks where it is said that Monmouth's rustics sharpened their knives and billhooks—but which are more probably the marks of the swords of the Royalists quartered there the night before the battle. There is a brass dated 1490 to a Sydenham whose benefactions included the institution of a custom of selling a piece of land every 21 years to provide for repairs to the church, the auction lasting during the burning of half-an-inch of candle. The next auction is not due until 1946. A similar custom prevails at Tatworth, near Chard.

Middlezoy, the most distant of the three Zoys from Bridgwater, has a fine church chiefly remarkable for the beauty of its geometrical tracery and its woodwork. Its principal tangible link with the battle is a small brass in the floor to " Louis Chevalier de Misiers, a French gentleman who, after serving 18 years in the English Army, was killed at Sedgemoor." Such ravages as the church has suffered are due to Fairfax's troopers, who bivouacked there during the Civil War, on their way to Bridgwater, but who fortunately left a few things untouched to lend the church interest for antiquarians.

Othery, which lies at the southern end of the island of Zoyland, though curiously enough without discoverable associations with the Sedgemoor battle, is in some ways the most interesting of the marsh villages. Fortunate in escaping the unwelcome attentions of Parliamentary troops during the Civil War, its church is a 13th century building altered and in part rebuilt in the two following centuries. It has a

Parish Church,
Langport.

Hanging Chapel,
Langport.

Cornhill,
Bridgwater.

wonderful octagonal tower with remarkably fine niches and figures. The most puzzling of all the low side windows to be found in Somerset churches is seen here—constructed with more than usual difficulty by piercing a buttress for no purpose which can now be discovered.

THE POLDEN HILLS.

Although the Polden hills never rise above 300 ft., there is scarcely any range in England which gives such incomparable views. On either side they drop down to the great plain of Sedgemoor, rich and lovely with its delicious haze of blue, and bounded on the one hand by the great rampart of the Mendips and on the other by the soft beauty of the distant Quantocks. Walking along the roads which run the whole length of the ridge is an extraordinarily exhilarating experience, giving a sensation of being " on top of the world " more surely than many far greater heights can do.

Like the Blackdowns and the Brendons, these hills are unaccountably neglected by tourists, and this is all the more strange in that the Poldens are unusually accessible. A railway line runs parallel with the hills, serving all their adorable little villages, and the whole range is within easy reach of Bridgwater or Glastonbury.

The amazing thing about these hills is that with all the tourists who visit Bridgwater and Sedgemoor, the Polden villages are absolutely unspoiled. Anything more remote and unconscious of " strangers " than Bawdrip, for instance, it would be impossible to find—no inn, no lodgings, not even a village shop—yet the railway with its unobtrusive little Halt is beside the first cottage of the tiny village, and it is within four miles of Bridgwater and only a quarter of a mile from the main road ! Hidden behind a grassy hill, its simple, rose-bowered cottages are grouped around its interesting little church, which has a 13th century effigy of a knight in plate armour under a foliated canopy, and an inscription which has given rise to a local version of the ubiquitous legend of the Mistletoe Bough Chest, in connection with the

manor-house of Knowle. High on a wooded hill about a mile away, in full view of Bawdrip, is a picturesque ruin which, though the villagers earnestly assure the rare visitor it is "turr'ble ancient," was actually built about one hundred and fifty years ago in the park of Knowle. The explanation given is that the then owner had married a French lady who pined for her native country, and that he built the sham castle to please her. One version says it was a replica of her French home, and another that it was to enable her to look towards the French coast—scarcely credible in view of the fact that this is East Somerset! The charming Georgian mansion of Knowle occupies the site of an earlier manor which was one of the countless places said to be the original scene of the story of the Mistletoe Bough Chest—that tragic tale of the young bride who, in the course of a game on her wedding day, hid in a chest carved with mistletoe boughs, and was imprisoned in it by a spring lock and consequently suffocated. Rogers, and Haynes Bayley, two early Victorian poets, embodied the legend in verse, one giving Modena as the scene, but the other giving Lovel as the name of the bridegroom—and it was Eleanor Lovell who was buried at Bawdrip in 1671 and the vague Latin inscription on whose epitaph gave rise to the local tradition. Puriton, the only English manor William the Conqueror bestowed on the Church of Rome, lies nearby at the extreme western end of the Poldens.

Woolavington is a charming and typical Polden village, quaint with indeterminate streets which melt into the surrounding fields, and picturesque with a duck-pond and fine old church. This church has a Norman nave and an Early English chapel, and a curious stone carved with the initials of Sir John Hody, who was Lord Chief Justice in the reign of Henry VI. Even if Woolavington was uninteresting in itself, it would be well worth a visit for the amazing view as the road drops down to the village. The great fertile plain of Burnham level stretches to the foot of the Mendips, with the curious, isolated hills of Glastonbury and Brent Knoll rising in lonely majesty at opposite ends of the valley

of the Axe, with Brean Down green and smooth against the waters of the Severn Sea, and Weston-super-Mare showing dimly beyond—a lovely and breath-taking view in which the eye is drawn and focused by the ancient church of Uphill, standing high on the edge of the Mendips above the sea, and shining in the sun like a pillar of flaming silver pointing to the blue vault of the sky.

Woolavington's rival, the neighbouring village of Cossington, is hidden in a hollow of the hills and relies solely on its own beauty—a beauty more rare and perfect than is often found, even in this county of lovely villages. The church, delightfully situated in the charming grounds of the manor-house, has a 16th century brass. In the centre of the village is the great yew tree known as the Preaching Tree—it is said because Wesley once stood in its shade to preach. Chilton-upon-Polden, another charming village, has a curious sham priory built in modern times, which incorporates material said to have belonged to a Benedictine Priory.

Edington boldly claims to be the site of the battle of Ethandune, in opposition to the Wiltshire town. The fact that Guthrum's forces were concentrated in the Poldens, and that Alfred's army was probably gathered in the Quantocks under Earl Odda, and that the battle was followed by the treaty of Wedmore, and Guthrum's baptism at Aller, makes the claim of this Somerset village quite plausible, and the records of the time are too confused to make Wiltshire's claim entirely unassailable.

Catcott is one of the larger villages of the Poldens, and has a quaint old church with oak seats and an octagonal font. Shapwick, too, is a fairly large village. Its church has a central tower supported by Early English arches ; piscinas in the south and north walls of the aisles ; and a large 17th century mural monument.

The delightful Loxley woods, and Swayne's Leaps, are on the hill-top between Shapwick and Moorlynch. The main road between Bridgwater and Glastonbury runs through the heart of the woods, and a little wicket gate leads to the

famous " Leaps," which commemorate a sequel to the Battle of Sedgemoor. One of the prisoners, named Swayne, was bidden by the Royalist soldiers to leap for his life. His legs were bound together, and there is little doubt it was intended he should die, however great his prowess, but the young man gave three great leaps—now marked by small stones—and, bounding into a coppice, managed to effect his escape.

Stawell, Sutton Mallet, and Greinton with its interesting church, are peaceful little villages on the southern slopes of the Poldens, looking westward across King's Sedgemoor to the Quantocks and the sea. Ashcott, on the northern face of the hills, commands an inspiring view of Glastonbury Tor. Walton with its immensely long street, its curiously picturesque modern church, its 15th century thatched parsonage which is now a farm, and its windmill-crowned hill, is almost joined to the neighbouring village of Street, which spreads itself for nearly a mile along the main road, seemingly in an endeavour to justify its name, which was probably derived from the Roman causeway which has recently been excavated there. Street was the birthplace of John Xavier Merriman, the distinguished South African statesman, who died in 1926. It was also for many years the home of the late Walter Raymond, the famous Somersetshire novelist.

It is but a couple of miles from Street into Glastonbury, and Butleigh, which was given to the monks of Glastonbury in the time of King Egbert, is equally near. Butleigh Church has been practically rebuilt in modern times, but Butleigh Court is an interesting old mansion and Ivythorne Manor is a delightful 15th century house. Butleigh's chief claim to fame is its association with the Hood family. A monument crowning the wooded ridge above Butleigh, which is a landmark for many miles around, was erected in 1831 in memory of Sir Samuel Hood, one of three brothers who had had distinguished careers as sailors. An epitaph in Butleigh Church written by Southey commemorates their exploits. Two other, and still more famous sailors born in Butleigh during the 18th century, were Samuel and Alexander Hood,

South Porch, Wedmore Churc

Wedmore.

sons of the Vicar, the former of whom was created Viscount Hood, and the latter Viscount Bridport.

EAST SEDGEMOOR AND BURNHAM LEVEL.

East Sedgemoor is the low-lying pastureland between Glastonbury and Wells which merges imperceptibly into the great Burnham Level. During the Middle Ages the chief landowners in the district were the Abbots of Glastonbury, who had a manor-house at Sharpham, another at Meare, and village chapelries at West Pennard and Pilton on the Pennard ridge, an outcrop from the Mendips which is a conspicuous feature of East Sedgemoor. Sharpham Manor, though now a farm, is of the utmost interest, for in this 15th century house the last Abbot of Glastonbury was arrested, and here were born two of Sharpham's most famous sons—Sir Edward Dyer, the Elizabethan poet, who was a friend of Sir Philip Sidney, and Henry Fielding, the great novelist. Dyer's best known work is a delightful poem on Contentment—singularly appropriate in Somerset, where contentment is still the key-note of the countryside—and it was set to music by no less a composer than William Byrd. The room in which Fielding was born, known as "The Harlequin's Chamber," remains unaltered. Yet another native of Sharpham who achieved fame was Dr. John Bull, the reputed author of our national anthem.

Though it is the discovery of the Lake villages which has brought European fame to Meare, the mediæval Fish House, Manor-house, and church have a greater appeal to all but antiquarians. The Fish House has been scheduled as a National Monument, for there is nothing quite like it surviving elsewhere. It is a sturdy 14th century building rather like a tithe-barn, with a lower story used to store the fish, and an upper floor, divided into two rooms, which was the dwelling house, and was probably reached by an outside stairway. It is set beside the River Brue, and was at one time surrounded by well-stocked fishponds which are said to have extended for over 500 acres. The 13th century Manor-house was a favourite retreat of the Abbots, who reached it

by rowing over the mere in their state barge. It is now a farm, but preserves its great hall with the elaborate fireplace and windows, a double-storied porch, a kitchen, and two sides of the quadrangle. The adjoining church belongs in the main to the 14th and 15th centuries. The 15th century village cross has been removed to a piece of open ground in front of the school.

The famous lake village is a short distance outside Meare. It was discovered in 1895, and excavations were made annually up to 1933 under the direction of Mr. H. St. George Gray and Dr. Bulleid, and with the discoveries made by the latter on the neighbouring site at Godney, have resulted in the most important contributions to the knowledge of the Lake Dwellers yet gained. Dating from over two thousand years ago, the Lake villages themselves, though fascinating in theory, have little to appeal to the eye of any but the expert archæologists, but the relics removed to the Museums at Glastonbury and Taunton Castle are interesting in the extreme, and calculated to fire the imagination of the least learned.

Godney village, which lies about two miles east of Meare, has no special claims upon the interest of tourists apart from its lake village, but is the butt of some obscure local joke about "Godney lighthouse and Godney ducks" which apparently refers to some half-forgotten foolishness of Godney men on the same plane as the efforts of the Three Wise Men of Gotham to imprison the cuckoo. Needless to say, there is no lighthouse at Godney, and it is firmly and delightedly believed by all the surrounding district that the mere mention of lighthouses and ducks will infuriate any Godney man or woman.

This particular corner of Sedgemoor is strongly reminiscent of Western Ireland, rather than Holland, partly owing to the insidious, insistent smell of the peat fires, and partly because an obvious, though picturesque, poverty replaces the trim and prosperous aspect of other Sedgemoor villages.

Wedmore, the scene of the treaty between King Alfred and the Danes, which altered the whole course of English history,

has been content with that epoch-making event and led an almost entirely undisturbed existence ever since, the only subsequent link with national history being the hanging of a doctor by Judge Jeffreys because he had dressed the wounds of one of Monmouth's soldiers—well calculated to persuade Wedmore's inhabitants to relapse into obscurity. The village is a charming place set on a low ridge above the moors, and has a splendid and spacious church dating from the 12th century, with alterations and additions made in the 13th and 15th centuries. There is a remarkable wall painting, a fine Jacobean pulpit, and two ancient brasses in the church. The village cross, a nearly perfect specimen of late 14th century work with a beautifully sculptured canopied head, stands in front of the house in which tradition says Judge Jeffreys lodged. A second cross, dating from the 15th century, stands in the churchyard. At Mudgeley, a hamlet 1½ miles away, excavations have revealed the foundations of an ancient building which is believed by some to have been a palace of King Alfred.

Wedmore is a good centre for this part of the moor, and particularly for visiting Mark, which lies five miles away, and has an extremely attractive and noble church which is a 13th century building reconstructed in the Perpendicular period. There is a beautiful panelled roof in the north aisle, some finely carved figures of the Evangelists in the chancel, which were brought from Bruges Cathedral by a former vicar, and a curious feature in the carved representation of the heads of King Edward VII, Queen Alexandra, and Bishop Kenyon. The village appears as the birthplace of the Man of Mark in Fielding's novel "Tom Jones."

Highbridge is the almost inevitable centre for exploring the Burnham Level, though it can also be reached quite easily from Burnham or Weston-super-Mare.

Highbridge is set on the River Brue, in the midst of some of the richest grazing land in the kingdom, and though entirely modern and without antiquarian interest, is in the heart of a district which has been populated—though sparsely, it is true—from time immemorial, and has some

interesting links with past centuries. The wonder is that the site of Highbridge was not utilised before. The river is navigable for small craft up to this point, and it is the obvious place for dealing with the agricultural produce of the district. Highbridge is rapidly developing on pleasant modern lines as a market town and residential centre, and its advantages as a tourist centre are becoming increasingly well-known. It is also closely linked by rail and road with Burnham, which lies only 2 miles away, and the proximity of the sea-side resort and its amenities adds very considerably to the attractions of the inland town.

A mile beyond Highbridge is Huntspill, whose church is an imposing building. It suffered severely in a fire during the latter part of the 19th century, and was consequently almost entirely rebuilt, but a fine black oak pulpit, and the effigies of a mailed knight and his lady, fortunately survive.

Burnham Level is dominated by the lonely height of Brent Knoll, a conspicuous conical hill rising abruptly from the meadows in much the same way as Glastonbury Tor stands out at the eastern end of the plain. The summit is crowned by a British camp, and commands a glorious panorama of the surrounding countryside and sea shore, and there are two quite delightful villages at its feet—South Brent and East Brent, each of which has an interesting church. South Brent church is mainly Perpendicular, but incorporates earlier work, and has a fine wooden roof in the north aisle, a 17th century mural monument, an unusual font, and some 15th century carved bench ends which are amusing in their humorous representation of scenes which include a series showing a fox dressed in the robes of an abbot being brought to trial and executed. East Brent church has a tall and graceful spire surmounting a great tower. The interior is lavishly decorated with modern frescoes, and has some mediæval carvings and stained glass. Lympsham, a notably pretty little hamlet, lies midway between Brent Knoll and the Mendips. The handsome tower of the church leans westward several feet out of the perpendicular.

Brent Knoll Church.

The Fox in Abbot's Clothing.

Hanging the Fox.

The Fox condemned to death.

The "Pilgrime's Inn,"
Glastonbury.

GLASTONBURY

CHAPTER VI

Glastonbury is a dream come true to most visitors. Arriving with all the tender and romantic legends of Glastonbury filling their minds, and eager to see the Holy Thorn planted by Joseph of Arimathea, the gracious ruins marking the site of the first Christian Church in England, and the tomb in which the remains of King Arthur and Queen Guinivere were once buried, they see the great tor with its church tower standing against the skyline long before they reach the town itself, no matter in which direction they approach the town. No place in Somerset shows more clearly its island origin than Glastonbury. The whole plain which was once the sea-bed seems to sweep up to the lovely little ridge of hills dominated by the Tor with its tower pointing like a slender finger to heaven.

THE LEGENDS AND HISTORY OF GLASTONBURY.

The writer with a passion for documented evidence and accuracy is confronted by a formidable task in dealing with the origin of Glastonbury and its early associations. All the

fragrant traditions which appeal so strongly to the imagination are without written support earlier than the 13th century, and antiquarians merely make confusion worse confounded with their endless theorising, each new contention being as entirely without reliable confirmation as the legends they seek to disprove. In the circumstances, all but the matter-of-fact will most rightly reject any suggestion that Glastonbury has no associations with Joseph of Arimathea and King Arthur. Not only are the traditions in favour of both these beliefs as strong as those which refute them, but no one with a flicker of imagination or idealism would fail to accept these gracious and lovely traditions, for they have been the inspiration of youth and age for countless generations, and are the true source of the veneration in which Glastonbury was held all through the Middle Ages.

The charming story of St. Joseph's landing at Glastonbury —then an island—with the eleven holy men who were his companions ; the planting of the Holy Thorn ; King Aviragus's consent to their building a little wattle-roofed church, and his grant of a hide of land to each (believed to be the origin of the Twelve Hides of Glastonbury), are known to every intending visitor to Glastonbury, but when charming legend becomes documented fact their knowledge frequently becomes more vague. There is evidence of a charter being granted to the Abbey in A.D.601 which pointed to Glastonbury having been in existence for many centuries, whilst charters granted in A.D. 708, and one by Canute in 1032, are still in existence. Still another tradition exists that St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born at or near Glastonbury, returned to convert the sanctuary into an abbey after his labours in Ireland, and was finally buried there in A.D. 493. Conflicting with this is the claim that St. Patrick is buried at Downpatrick in Ulster, and it is more probable that Glastonbury's claim arose through the confusion of two saints of similar name.

The tradition that King Arthur and Queen Guinivere were buried in Glastonbury is supported by the known fact

St. Mary's Chapel,
Glastonbury.

Abbot's Kitchen, Glastonbury.

Glastonbury Tor, Vale of Avalon.

that Henry II sought for and found the coffin in 1177, and had them re-buried after marking the coffin with a plate bearing their names, and that eighty years later Edward I and his Queen visited the monastery and caused the coffin to be opened in their presence before a final re-burial in front of the high altar. It is recorded that when the coffin was first opened Guinivere was seen for a moment in all her beauty, with long plaits of golden hair, but that as the air reached the body it crumbled instantly to dust.

It is with the coming of Dunstan that all legends are laid aside and facts emerge. Born at or near Glastonbury, this great son of Somerset not only laid the foundations of the Abbey's power, making it a model for all other monastic institutions, but laid the first foundations of the English Kingdom by insisting on the conciliation of the defeated Danes, and the necessity for the unity of the country under one king, which culminated in 973 in the crowning of Edgar at Bath as King of All England by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, in memory of which event the Bishop of Bath and Wells still stands by the side of the English sovereign at his coronation.

Although it is customary to regard the tradition of Joseph of Arimathea as mythical, it is curious that his presence in England has more than once received the highest ecclesiastical mention. On one occasion the English bishops at the Council of Basle in 1434 claimed precedence over those of France and Spain on the ground of " Britain's conversion by Joseph of Arimathea." There can be no doubt that the tiny wattle-roofed church at Glastonbury, whoever its founder, was the place where the lamp of Christianity was first lighted in Great Britain, and there seems in addition great reason to believe that it can justly claim to be the first Christian church in the world to be built above ground. When Glastonbury was founded, the Christians of Rome were still worshipping in the catacombs.

All through the fierce wars that swept over England when pagan invaders were slaughtering the Christian Britons, and

Christianity was time and again wiped out in the rest of England, the remoteness of the little island church saved it from destruction, so that it is the only place in England which can truly claim to have maintained the Christian religion unbroken through the centuries. When St. Augustine landed in England to convert the pagans, he discovered that Christians were living peaceably at Glastonbury, and expressed his amazement in a letter he wrote to Rome. Ancient Welsh triads mention Glastonbury as one of the three chief perpetual choirs in Britain.

Small wonder that this unbroken tradition of peace in a land which was so often invaded lent a peculiar sanctity to Glastonbury, or that the association of the Church with the last days of Arthur caused the abbey to hold a very special place in the affections of the people of the Middle Ages. A succession of exceedingly able abbots, combined with the aura of sanctity which drew pilgrims in a constant stream from all parts of the country, caused Glastonbury to develop into the second greatest and wealthiest of all the monasteries of England, with the natural result that it was one of the first to fall before the cupidity of Henry VIII. The story of the tragic end of the last Abbot, Richard Whiting, a gentle and upright old man who was hanged on Glastonbury Tor without the shadow of justice or even a pretence at a trial, is one which cannot fail to arouse sympathy, even when the hearer is not in accord with the religious scruples for which Richard Whiting gave his life.

THE ABBEY RUINS.

The ruins at Glastonbury are exquisitely lovely, enriched with amazingly intricate and beautiful carving, and tended with a loving care which allows nothing to mar the perfection of their beauty. No buildings have been allowed to encroach too near, and the grey old walls stand out against a level expanse of smooth green grass which allows everyone to examine their beauty from every possible angle, and to gain

Glastonbury Abbey.

Glastonbury
Abbey.

delightful view points of every part of the exterior walls, in addition to wandering round the roofless aisles and naves.

Some idea of the amazing size and magnificence of the Abbey in the days of its greatness is gained immediately upon entering St. Mary's Chapel, which is the best preserved portion of the ruin. The crumbling walls stretch away to the site of the High Altar and the Chapel of King Edgar, a total length of 582 feet from the western end—211 feet longer than Wells Cathedral.

Unobtrusive but very welcome signs indicate the various portions of the church, and mark the site of the original wattle-roofed church; the foundation of St. Dunstan's chapel; and the foundation of the Saxon church which was discovered in 1928-9. Slightly apart from the other buildings is the famous Abbot's Kitchen, in an almost perfect state of preservation. The walls and roof, which were probably built in the early part of the 14th century, are still intact. A slip from the Holy Thorn, planted to replace the bush cut down by a fanatical Puritan, grows on the north bank at the east end of the choir.

The surviving portions of the Abbey date from varying periods. St. Mary's Chapel is one of the first examples of the transition from Norman to Early English. Built in 1184, its interior and exterior walls are panelled with arcades of intersecting semi-circular arches on which the rich carvings still survive, though the mural paintings have now disappeared. The Crypt, or Chapel of St. Joseph, below is of 15th century work, and is of special interest as it shows the ingenuity of the builders in not disturbing the foundations of the Chapel. The Holy Well of St. Mary, discovered in 1825, is reached from the Crypt through a passageway about 17 feet long. The Galilee, which adjoins the Lady Chapel, dates from the 13th century, and the Nave, commenced in 1184, was not completed until the 14th century. It is here that the excavations were made which trace the walls of the Saxon church of King Ine built in the 7th and 8th centuries, with additions made by St. Dunstan in the

10th century. The transepts date from the 13th century. The foundations are all that remain of the 15th century cloisters and other monastic buildings, and the 16th century Edgar Chapel.

THE TOWN OF GLASTONBURY.

The fame of Glastonbury is so closely bound up with the monastery that few people realise before they walk down Glastonbury's High Street that the town itself has so much of interest. Its ancient buildings are in a far more perfect state of preservation than the abbey ruins, and several of them are being used for their original purpose in the present day. The George Inn was built in 1475 to accommodate pilgrims to the Abbey—and what are present-day tourists if not pilgrims paying their tribute of interest, if not reverence, to the famous Abbey? The splendid carved stone front of the inn is not only the finest, but the earliest example of its kind, the majority of domestic buildings of the period being of wood and plaster. A fine hall upstairs is approached by the original staircase, and there is some beautiful carved woodwork to be seen. Further up the same street is the Tribunal House which was the Abbot's Court House. Built by the last abbot but one, it has the arms of Henry VII and the Tudor rose on panels above the entrance.

The chief Abbey Barn is still standing in an exceptionally fine state of preservation. The exterior is beautifully proportioned and was once ornamented with statues. There are some splendid old beams in the interior, and a passage which it is traditionally said used to lead to the Abbey, which lies 470 yards away. A row of Almshouses dating from 1512 stand near the entrance to the Abbey. The two Glastonbury churches are also of more than common interest. One dates from 1485 and the other from the 16th century. The former is a splendid building with a very fine tower, and contains some interesting features including a large and beautifully carved stone tomb which the vicar endeavoured to prove had been constructed in the

Middle Ages to hold the coffin of Joseph of Arimathea. His plausible deductions were published in the local paper, and a cutting is framed near the tomb, although the story has been generally discredited.

Glastonbury Museum, opened in 1885, is one of the most interesting in England, and not only contains many early British remains, but practically all the relics found during the periodic excavations carried out on the site of the prehistoric lake villages at Meare and Godney.

THE TOR AND WEARY-ALL HILL.

Tor Hill, which is about 520 ft. high, is reached by a winding pathway, and no one should fail to climb to the summit, not only to see the fine tower which is all that remains of the ancient church of St. Michael, but for the really glorious panorama of northern Somerset which stretches away on every hand, and embraces the city of Wells with its great Cathedral, the line of the Mendips, Brent Knoll, Brean Down, the Bristol Channel with the Welsh Hills beyond, and westward to the Polden Hills and the Quantocks. The carvings on the Tower are quaint and interesting, one showing a woman milking a cow, another the devil weighing the world against a human soul, and another a pelican plucking its own breast.

Weary-all Hill, though not so lofty as the Tor, also commands a fine view from its summit. It was here that St. Joseph traditionally landed and stuck his staff into the ground, where it bloomed as a sign, and has always since blossomed on Christmas Day. The original thorn was destroyed by a Puritan soldier in an excess of fanatical zeal, and only cuttings taken from the ancient thorn now exist. There is a decided, if unchristian, satisfaction in the knowledge that the vandal accidently cut off his own leg whilst destroying the tree. Even if the thorn was not planted by St. Joseph it was a rare and lovely thing which should have been left to bloom in peace.

WELLS AND THE MENDIPS

CHAPTER VII.

The mysterious fascination of the Mendips is so real and vital to those who know this extraordinary upland that it seems as though the hills are a living entity. In no way do they resemble any other hill range in England. Extending for thirty miles from Frome to Weston-super-Mare, they run without a single break for over 20 miles in a vast wall levelled on the summit to a long plateau where Roman roads and still more ancient British trackways abound. The range holds the secret of civilisations so old that they are beyond the ken of living man. It was the haunt of the mammoth and many other prehistoric beasts, who left their bones by the thousand in the great caves of Mendip. Above all, it is cleft by the strangest, wildest, loveliest gorges, glens and caves, two of which—Cheddar Gorge and Wookey Hole Cave—are unparalleled in England, and would alone make the range outstanding in interest and fascination.

Wells Cathedral.

Gatehouse to Bishop's Palace, Wells.

Swans ringing for food at the Palace Gatehouse, Wells.

The summit of this vast upland has a mysterious, lonely beauty, whispering of the age-old past and sometimes even revealing some of those secrets it hides in its heart, as at Charterhouse Bottom, where the living entities of the dawn of time are preserved as fossils which may be picked up haphazard in great handfuls.

There are times when the utter silence and majesty of Mendip catches at the heart, and fills the mind with a vast awe, as a realisation of the futility of man's endeavour and the enduring grandeur of nature sweeps over the solitary traveller as he senses an almost frightening quality in its immensity. It is as though the warmth has died out of the sunshine and the small intimate sounds of birds and insects is hushed for the voice of Mendip to speak—and then a tiny hamlet or even a solitary little cottage comes as a comforting assurance that civilisations may pass away, but man endures in his own way. Then the sun is again warm and comforting, and the birds sing gaily in the unclouded sky, and ever afterwards in some indefinable way Mendip seems a part of the traveller's very existence, a strange and precious heritage.

MENDIP TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

It is only in the solitary heart of the plateau that this queer spirit of Mendip is made manifest. Those who keep to the great highways, or the network of roads linking the innumerable villages on Mendip never fully sense the strange wild soul of the hills, but these Mendip villages have such a compelling fascination that they are in themselves a little world of beauty and interest, whilst the vast gorges and caves they neighbour have an added quality of rarity which is irresistible.

There are many fair and ancient places in Mendip-land, but Wells transcends them all, not merely in size, but in all that can link and explain the present and the past. The interest of Wells, indeed the very life of the little city, is bound up with that of the Cathedral which is a unique and perfect survival of the past; a place where the hand of

progress has fallen lightly, respecting the beauty and peace of this living link with our forefathers. During the Middle Ages there were many such cities, but wars and spoliation culminating in the Dissolution wrought havoc with all but Wells. Other great cathedrals survive, but only at Wells are the whole of the ecclesiastical buildings still standing, enclosed in a wall which shuts out the secular city from the quiet precincts of the great Cathedral.

The builders of this glorious Cathedral not only designed one of the greatest and most splendid churches in the kingdom, but enhanced their work by planning a perfect setting of a spacious Close with smooth, tree-shaded lawns flanked by buildings which are a perfect complement to the vast and stately minster, enclosing the whole in a wall pierced by four beautiful gateways. Even the moated bishop's palace lies within these sheltering walls, and so successfully has the march of time been arrested that to pass from the city through one of the gateways is to step back across the centuries into pre-Renaissance England.

Wells Cathedral was completed about the end of the thirteenth century—soon after the cathedrals of Amiens and Chartres, both of which it surpasses in the magnificence of its conception. The whole building is exquisitely proportioned, and the exterior is decorated with a marvellous richness which is a perfect foil for the lovely simplicity of the interior. The famous West Front was built by a native of Wells, Bishop Jocelin, and dedicated in 1239, and there is nothing to compare with it in all Europe. More than six hundred figures, one hundred and fifty of which are life-size or larger, are sculptured on that wonderful facade in a marvellous pageant of kings, queens, princes, ecclesiastics, and nobles.

Although at first sight the interior gives an impression of unadorned simplicity in contrast with the rich West Front, a closer examination reveals that it is in reality literally a museum of the finest mediæval sculpture. There is a delightful sense of spaciousness in the lofty nave, whose

The Nave,
Wells Cathedral.

Lady Chapel,
Wells Cathedral.

lines seem to flow upward into infinity, and the whole building is flooded with light which enables every detail to be studied with care, and is a relief from the gloom of so many mediæval buildings. There are innumerable beautiful things to see in this gracious building. Every one of the capitals of the pillars in the nave is carved with delicate precision with decorations ranging from formal Early English foliage to subjects which include a moral tale in four scenes showing the retribution which overtakes fruit-stealers ; a girl extracting a thorn from her foot ; a man suffering from toothache ; and kindred characters, all executed with an obvious sense of humour and flawless craftsmanship, which is only rivalled by the wonderful carvings on the misericorde seats in the choir.

Among the chief glories of the Cathedral are an exquisitely lovely Lady Chapel, wonderful 14th century stained glass, a 13th century octagonal Chapter House approached by a graceful and unusual flight of steps, two beautiful chantries, and some richly-carved tombs to various bishops. The earliest monument is to Bishop Giso, who died in 1088, and the most striking is the gorgeous Beckington monument, which shows the bishop dressed in his state robes, with the representation of a corpse in a winding sheet below, and a splendid canopy above. There is also a fine Crypt and, although the Cathedral was never a monastic institution, there are some very lovely cloisters. The famous clock, which attracts and delights all tourists, is in the north transept. Constructed in the 14th century by a monk of Glastonbury, it has mechanical figures to mark the hours. Four knights on horseback revolve every hour, one of whom is unhorsed. A curious figure, known as Jack Blandiver and seated a little way away from the clock, kicks a bell with his heels every quarter of an hour, and strikes the hour with a hammer. Although originally made in the 14th century, subsequent repainting has resulted in his now wearing the costume of King Charles I's reign. Two knights in armour on the outside of the cathedral, connected with the clock,

strike the quarters on bells with their battle-axes. Known as the " quarter jacks," they too, have changed their original costumes and are clad like the knights who followed King Henry VII in procession when he stayed in the Deanery opposite, after the suppression of the rebellion of Perkin Warbeck.

A fine chain gateway across the road leads from the Cathedral to the quaint and picturesque Vicars' Close, which vies with the Bishop's Palace in its interest and charm. The double row of delightful little 14th century houses, each with its tiny garden, has a chapel at one end and a Common Hall at the other, the latter of which retains its original stained glass and has some lovely 15th century furniture.

The Bishop's Palace of Wells, though fortified, was built with more attention to comfort than defence. It is in the main a 13th century building, a charming house in an enchanting garden, surrounded by mellow brick walls and a moat on which the famous swans of Wells glide to ring for their food when they are hungry. This quaint trick, handed down since 1850 by generations of swans to their cygnets, was taught the original swan—which is now to be seen stuffed in the Wells Museum—by Miss Eden, daughter of Bishop Eden who afterwards became Lord Auckland. It was in the Great Hall of the Bishop's Palace that Abbot Whiting of Glastonbury underwent a mock trial before his execution.

The palace gardens are entered by an ancient drawbridge over the moat and a portcullised gateway. Bishop Beckington's Well House, which was built over the springs from which the city takes its name, is in the palace garden, and the fine 15th century Bishop's Barn is but a short distance from the moat.

The history of Wells Cathedral is purely ecclesiastical, the only link with national events having occurred during the Monmouth rebellion, when the more fanatical followers of Monmouth commenced to destroy the " idolatrous building,"

Stairs to
Chapter House,
Wells
Cathedral.

Vicar's Clos
Wells.

Clocks of
Wells Cathedral.

r the North Porch.

"Jack Blandiver"
in North Transept

Astronomical
Clock.

but were overcome by their more level-headed comrades, led by Lord Grey, who stood in front of the altar to prevent its desecration—an incident vividly described in Conan Doyle's "Micah Clarke."

The City of Wells, though of ancient foundation, is far smaller than many modern towns—a place of ease and contentment refusing to bow to the modern craze for senseless speed and noise, but progressive enough to adopt any modern amenities which add to the pleasure and comfort of life. Cradled in green hills which seem to guard it from the rest of the world, it reflects the resposeful dignity of the Cathedral. Although Wells has little history apart from that of its Cathedral, there are many ancient buildings to lend it an interest of its own. Several of the inns and hotels date back to the Middle Ages or even earlier, and it is said that William Penn, when refused permission to preach in the Market Place, gathered an audience of over 2,000 people in the stableyard of the neighbouring Crown Inn. The glorious parish church of St. Cuthbert is chiefly Perpendicular, but has many traces of Early English work. It has a remarkably beautiful tower, and several interesting features. The neighbouring Almshouses were built in the early 15th century by Bishop Bubwith. There is a 14th century bakery in St. Thomas's Street, and a number of houses either entirely mediæval or bearing traces of ancient carvings and gargoyles. The Town Hall in which the Assizes are held dates from 1779, and has some interesting paintings and MSS.

Wells Museum, housed in a lovely building near the Deanery, has an unusually well-arranged display of antiquities and curios from all parts of the world, but its chief interest is centred in the wonderful collection of relics from Wookey Hole caves made by the Curator, Mr. H. E. Balch, the famous antiquarian. The bones, pottery, implements and other relics date back to the earliest times and include the bones of the Witch of Wookey and her crystal.

Wells, as the undoubted "capital" of the Mendips, is naturally an excellent centre from which to explore the

many roadways of the range. One roadway from Wells skirts the lower slopes of the Mendips, to Uphill on the western face of the range—some twenty miles away—and returns along the north of the range, joining the Bristol Road at Chewton Mendip to cross the hills back to Wells. The two greatest marvels of the Mendips—Cheddar Gorge and Wookey Hole Caves—are reached by this roadway, which also serves endless charming towns and villages and runs through much of the characteristic scenery of the hills.

Other roads run to Radstock and Bath, and to Frome, linking Wells with the Eastern Mendips, and there are two railways serving the most notable towns and villages of the district.

THE WESTERN MENDIPS.

The first village along the road westward is Wookey, which, though frequently confused with its neighbour Wookey Hole, is quite a different place. The church was originally a 13th century building, but has been restored almost out of recognition. It contains a plain altar tomb dated 1689, and several ancient chests. Only two steps and the socket remain of the 13th century churchyard cross, but these are beautifully carved. Near the church stands "Mellifont Abbey," which is built on the site of the old rectory, parts of which it incorporates. The Court is now a farm-house, but it was once a manor of the Bishops of Bath and Wells and the hall, moat and fishponds testify to its ancient dignity. Alexander Barclay, the author of the "Ship of Fools," a rhymed translation and adaptation of Brandt's satire on the follies of the 15th century, was an incumbent of Wookey.

The village of Wookey Hole lies about a mile off the main road. It is a delightful little place at the head of the valley in which the Wookey Hole Caves are to be found. The supreme attraction of Wookey Hole is the underground River Axe, which flows through three great caverns, and

escapes into the enchanting wooded valley through a cleft in the cliff walls.

These caves were inhabited by a tribe from Brittany from 250 B.C. to A.D. 400, and relics have been found which allow the whole story of their lives to be reconstructed—even to the games played by their children! The tribe apparently remained there undisturbed all through the Roman occupation, a fact which is all the more curious when it is remembered that the Romans exploited the lead mines which are within a few miles of Wookey Hole, and that they built roads and earthworks on every part of Mendip.

Although known to the small boys of the neighbourhood, who explored them with candles, frequently with much fear and trembling—and who does not envy them such a thrilling experience to boast?—they were not excavated until 1909, when Mr. Balch, a native of Wells, and a life-long student of the geology and antiquities of Mendip, commenced excavating. The majority of the finds now in the Wells Museum were discovered between 1909 and 1914, but excavations are still proceeding, and the caves still yield a rich harvest to the investigators. When Mr. Balch commenced his excavations all the legends connected with the site were still current in the village, handed down by word of mouth for nearly two thousand years, and one of the most interesting results of his work, from the point of view of the tourist, is that relics confirming the legends beyond possibility of doubt were found in the first cavern. The Witch of Wookey may not have had all the supernatural powers attributed to her, but she was a real person who lived in the time of King Arthur with her goat and crystal, just as the old stories related.

As long ago as A.D. 189, Clement of Alexandria mentioned a phenomenon of Wookey Hole in his writings, to illustrate his contention that there were supernatural agencies. The extraordinary sound of clashing cymbals he described can still be heard at certain periods of the year—but modern science has explained that it is caused by a natural suction

of the river in flood time. On the other side of the valley is one of the earliest known abodes of prehistoric man, now named the Hyæna Den owing to the fact that it was the home of these animals before the dawn of recorded history, and not, as some visitors hopefully believe, because there are live hyænas on show there! Explored by Sir William Boyd Dawkins about the middle of last century, it has yielded the bones of the Irish elk, the great cave bear, the lion and woolly-rhinoceros, and a host of other creatures that roamed this land 40,000 years ago, and by the arrangement of the relics of man and beast found in alternate layers beneath the cave floor, the story of man's fight for life against these giant denizens of the forest has been reconstructed.

Until three or four years ago the Caves could only be imperfectly explored with the aid of candles or torches, and were not open to the general public. Now sufficient of the floor has been levelled to make easy walking, and powerful electric lights allow the beauty and eerie fascination of the caves and the underground river to be appreciated to the full. Nothing has been done which was not absolutely necessary for a proper exploration of the caves, and the most carping critic of " exploitation " cannot but appreciate the result. In one way, indeed, it has increased the natural beauty of the caves, for the warmth and light of the powerful electric globes has germinated seeds which have lain dormant, and clusters of rare and exquisite little ferns surround each lamp, springing from the bare rock.

The Valley into which the river Axe flows is one of the loveliest in England. The trees grow with a density which is intensified by long trails of ivy which fall from the branches over the mouth of the cave, and swing gently above the fern-draped banks of the river, giving an impression that this is some tropical forest rather than an English wood. A fine swimming pool with a sun bathing terrace adds to the fascination of the valley.

Ebbor Gorge, which cleaves the hills parallel with Wookey Hole, is another delightful and unspoiled ravine where the

Subterranean River Axe
in Wookey Hole Caves.

Cheddar Village.

cliffs rise to over 300 ft. and a narrow footpath leads up the face of the rocks to a glorious stretch of grass-clad uplands which commands magnificent views across three counties.

A roadway from Wookey Hole village passes the entrance to Ebbor Gorge and joins the main road two miles away at Easton, a charmingly quaint little hamlet.

A few miles farther on the road passes through Westbury, a place of some antiquity. The church has a Norman doorway, and contains a 16th century tomb to one of the Rodneys of the neighbouring village of Rodney Stoke, which vies with Westbury in a claim to be the prettiest village of the district. Rodney Stoke was originally a possession of the Giffard family and was called Stoke Giffard until the last of the Giffards married Sir Richard de Rodney. The tombs of the Rodneys, which range in date from 1478 to 1651, are the chief glory of the 15th century church.

Draycott, chiefly notable for its strawberries, is neighboured by Cheddar, which lies a mile away from the famous Gorge. The Perpendicular church has a particularly noble appearance, and has much to interest the tourist, including a 15th century stone pulpit which is one of the finest in the country ; a splendid roof ; a rich chantry to the Fitzwaters, and some brasses to the De Cheddars, but its most striking feature is its brilliant colouring. There are many who condemn so much paintwork as undignified, and it is certainly surprising in an English church to-day, but it should be remembered that in the Middle Ages all churches were elaborately painted—as they are still on the Continent—and as it is said the modern paint work reproduces the ancient design it is of great and uncommon interest, for it shows how mediæval churches must have looked when they were fresh from the hands of the builders. It is sometimes overlooked that the mellowness of such buildings came with the passing of centuries and was not an original attribute.

The Market Cross consists of a 15th century central shaft with a surrounding colonnade of six arches, which was

restored in 1834. The village has been celebrated through many centuries for its strawberries and its cheese.

The amazing Cheddar Gorge gives little hint of its existence until the roadway plunges between the great cliffs, winding for over a mile between the rugged walls which tower to a height of 450 feet, rising so sheerly that they seem of overwhelming proportions. Fretted into fantastic shapes by the storms of centuries, and softened by the ferns and bushes which cling precariously to every nook and cranny, they more than realise the expectations of every visitor. Not even the hordes of tourists visiting the caves every day during the season can impair the majesty of the gorge, and when it is seen at evening or early in the morning, free from the crowds, it is a revelation to those who have not realised the infinite variety and wonder of England's scenery.

It is said that the famous caverns were known as the Cheddarhole as far back as 1151, but they were re-discovered in modern times between 1837 and 1893. Some of the more remote caves, which are not shown to the public, were, like those at Wookey Hole, occupied in Roman times.

Both Gough's and Cox's Caves have been fitted with electric lighting skilfully arranged to shew up the beauty of the stalactites and stalagmites, which rival those of the most famous Continental grottos in their variety of fantastic form and rich colouring. These curious shapes, ranging from snowy white to deepest red, green, blue, or orange, give the caves all the glamour of a magician's den, and cannot be equalled in England for their variety and beauty. Many visitors have declared the Caves to be infinitely more lovely than those of the Ardennes, or even the famous caves of Kentucky. The skeleton of a Palæolithic man of 10,000 years ago was discovered in one of the caves, and there is an interesting collection of flint tools and bone implements in a little museum in the entrance to one of the Caves.

Axbridge, which lies a few miles beyond Cheddar, is an old-fashioned country town which is filled with fascinating mediæval survivals. The church is magnificent, with a lovely

sformation
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The Gorge,
Cheddar.

tower and an imposing flight of steps leading up from the little market place. There is a curious plaster ceiling in the nave, and in the south aisle chapel the tomb of Ann Prowse stands before an altar still covered with the cloth she worked in 1720.

There are not only a considerable number of ancient houses in Axbridge, but many of the most unlikely corners have mediæval work to show—one butcher's shop has an especially magnificent carved oak doorway, and in the Town Hall are preserved an early 17th century money-changers table, some old stocks, and the apparatus for bull-baiting. An entirely delightful building known as King John's Hunting Lodge is now a charming restaurant where the curious traveller can gaze his fill on the great oak beams and see the ancient latticed window preserved in the upper story, where may also be seen a little piece of the wall stripped of its plaster to show the withies used by the mediæval builders to fill in the interstices. Set among gardens in a sheltered nook of the hills, Axbridge is a delightful place, though its name is misleading, as the Axe flows down to the sea some distance from the town, and in actual fact the River Yeo is much nearer, though even that is about half-a-mile away.

Compton Bishop lies two miles from Axbridge, at the foot of Crook's Peak, a lofty isolated hill. The church contains a Norman font with a wooden cover dated 1617, and some ancient glass.

Between Crook's Peak and Bleadon Hill is the first real break in the Mendip range—the valley of the Lox Yeo river. Bleadon is an island hill over 500 ft. high, with the River Axe skirting its southern face, and some delightful villages on its slopes.

Loxton has a quaint church retaining much Norman and Early English work. It has a fine pulpit carved out of a single block of stone, a good screen, and a very curious squint in the porch. A headless 15th century cross is picturesquely set near the church and commands a view of the distant Crook's Peak. Christon, hidden away among the

hills, has a delightful little Norman church with a richly carved south doorway.

Bleadon has a noble church tower decorated with some fine gargoyles. There are two effigies of male figures, dating from the middle of the 14th century, and some mural carvings in the church. In the south porch is a carving of the Virgin and Child, with the figures of a man and woman in 14th century costume kneeling in prayer on either side. The 14th century steps and socket in the churchyard are surmounted by a shaft and cross of at least three centuries later. A fragment of the original shaft was discovered doing duty as the support to a hen-coop at a neighbouring farm, and now leans against the south wall of the Nave. Bleadon lies directly below a hill camp which is only vaguely traceable, and the main road is carried across the Axe by the first bridge at the seaward end of the river.

Uphill, the last of the true Mendip villages, lies at the foot of the hill beside the seashore, with its old church 100 ft. above. Originally a Norman building altered in the Perpendicular period, it is now practically disused, but the view from the churchyard is so inspiring that it is well worth the trouble of the steep climb. Immediately below is the tiny harbour which probably marks the site of the Roman harbour of Axium from which the produce of the Roman lead mines was exported. The old Roman road has been traced from this hill for 55 miles across the Mendips to Old Sarum near Salisbury, and the grass-clad, breeze-swept knoll is a remote and lonely little world which pricks the imagination to conjure up visions of the days when the legions swung down from the hills, and the harbour was swarming with men loading the ships under the efficient direction of their overseers. Great days for such a distant outpost of Britain to have known.

Below the church is a ferry across the Axe which lands passengers on the green fields stretching for nearly a mile to the foot of Brean Down, that last outcrop of the Mendip range before it plunges into the sea to re-appear once more

Axbridge.

Rock of Ages, Burrington Coombe.

Burrington Coombe.

as the islands of Steep Holme and Flat Holme before it finally expires. The grassy hill is now scheduled as a bird sanctuary and has an amazing variety of plant and bird life. There are said to be over a hundred different wild flowers on the hill, including the rare and delicate white rock rose. There are traces of two ancient encampments on the summit, and the slopes are a popular place for picnics. Brean village is a scattered hamlet nearly two miles away.

Hutton is one of those pretty little villages which have a definitely friendly air—possibly because, like many of the villages on Mendip, it has so few visitors that it is surprised and pleased to be noticed. The Church has been much restored, but remains a most attractive building, with a mediæval stone pulpit of delicate carving, and fine wagon roofs in the nave and chancel with exquisitely carved bosses and cornice flowers. Two unusual but welcome modern innovations are a cutting from a Weston-super-Mare magazine giving a detailed and very interesting account of the church's points of interest, written by Mr. A. B. Connor, a local antiquarian, which hangs in a frame on the North Wall, and a reproduction of a rubbing from the fine brass which is hidden and preserved beneath a carpet in the Choir.

The only features of note in Locking Church are an old square font with quaint figures at the angles, and a carved stone pulpit, but the neighbouring church of Banwell is one of the most interesting in Somerset, and certainly the finest on Mendip. It dates from about 1380 and is absolutely perfect in its proportions. The West front of the tower is enriched with figures of the Virgin and St. Gabriel which for many years after the Dissolution were believed to represent Henry VI and his queen, with the result that some later sculptor with a mistaken passion for symmetry gave St. Gabriel a lily to match the one held by the Virgin ! The church has a strikingly beautiful screen, each of the doors being cut out of a single block of oak ; a large array of bench-ends with poppy-heads ; an ancient font and stone pulpit ; four brasses, one of which is in the

vestry, and a window of old Flemish glass brought from Belgium in 1855, which depicts the story of Tobit.

Banwell is a delightfully picturesque village with some interesting antiquities. Banwell Court, which stands near the church, incorporates some portions of the manor built by Bishop Beckington, and marks the site of the Saxon manor given by King Alfred to Asser. It was in the earlier manor that the Bishops of Bath and Wells held their court, and Bishop King died in 1503. There is another delightful old manor which was built by Bishop Godwyn in 1584 as a summer residence, and several other ancient houses and relics in the village. Banwell Caves, which are not open to the public, were discovered in 1821, and yielded many bones of prehistoric animals. On the hillside above the village is a large turf cross about 50 ft. wide by 70 ft. long, raised in relief to a height of 2 ft. It is surrounded by a low stone fence, and is the only structure of its kind in Somerset, its origin being problematical. There is a more usual form of encampment on the hill summit above with an ancient trackway running nearby.

Winscombe lies off the main road in a charming valley, with its church set on rising ground which commands a fine view of the hills. Although of very ancient origin, it is still a secluded village delightful in its picturesque simplicity. There are many rills and brooks in the valley, and prosperous little farms bowered in orchards testify to the fertility of the soil. The church has a graceful tower and some ancient glass, but the only other link with the past in the village are some ruins near Max Mill—where the earliest wild snowdrops in the valley are found—which are believed to be the remains of the mill mentioned in Domesday book, and which was still working when Collinson saw it in 1791.

On Callow Hill, which rises on the east side of the valley, Hannah More and her sisters gave, in 1791, a then rare, if not unheard of, entertainment—a school treat to 517 children from the rural schools they had set up in the neighbourhood—and were condemned by several of the local clergy for their

" Methodistical and revolutionary undermining of the distinctions of rank and the British constitution itself " !

Churchill lies three miles away from Banwell, on the main road and, like Wellington, is associated in a rather remote way with one of the great soldiers of English history—John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, whose ancestors owned Churchill Court, the mansion standing near the church. There is no record that either he or his wife ever visited the Court, though curiously enough it is believed that his wife's ancestors also lived at Churchill, an interesting 16th century brass in the church to Ralph Jenyns and his wife being adduced as evidence. Another and more arresting monument in the church is the remarkably vivid 17th century effigy of Thomas Latch, habited as a Cavalier with boot and spur, gazing in melancholy abstraction at the form of his wife swathed in a shroud. The whimsical epitaph is said to have been written by Dr. Donne. Another unusual feature is the armour displayed in the south aisle. Churchill has a singularly lovely situation and is itself a place of considerable charm. The great earthworks of Dolbury Camp lie to the south east of the village, overhanging a ravine. Originally of Celtic construction, they were used by the Romans, who built the stone ramparts inside the earlier earthworks. An ancient local tradition tells that there is buried treasure in the camp.

Burrington is a small village near the mouth of Burrington Combe, a wild and lonely valley shut in by grass-clad hills which have a curious fascination. The famous cleft rock which inspired Toplady to write the hymn " Rock of Ages," is in this combe. The road from Burrington to Blagdon is exceedingly beautiful, running through the wooded Rickford Combe, which opens on to the lovely Blagdon lake shining in the sunlight, with the tree-clad Vale of Wrington beyond. Blagdon church, of which Toplady was at one time curate, has a handsome Perpendicular tower. The village is a good starting point for an ascent of Black Down Hill, the highest point on Mendip.

Ubley Church has a quaint pyramidal cap to its prominent stair turret, and possesses a chained copy of Erasmus's Paraphrase of the Gospels dated 1522. There is a fine restored cross on the little green in front of the church. A mile beyond Ubley is Compton Martin, which took its second name from the family which was descended from Martin de Treves, all of whom were great founders and endowers of churches, and one of whom probably built the wonderful Norman church of Compton Martin. There are so few Norman churches surviving in Somerset that Compton Martin is as surprising to find as it is notable to examine. It is not only the finest Norman church in the county, but would be unusual in any part of England as a building dating in its entirety from the 11th century. It is true it was worked over by builders of the Perpendicular period, but they did comparatively little, and made no structural alterations. It is a delightful coincidence that when this church was being built a saint was born in the village, St. Wulfric, of whom Roger de Wendover wrote much, and who prophesied the accession of King Stephen. Unfortunately there is no shrine or memorial to him in the village, and the chief memories of him are to be found at Haselbury Plucknett, near Crewkerne, where he died in 1154.

The village of Compton Martin has an exceptionally beautiful situation at the foot of the Mendips, which rise like a rampart in the background. The fine old 15th century moated house known as Bykefold Manor, though near the village, is hidden away and hard to find. West Harptree lies at the foot of the hills, in the delightful Chew Valley. The church, though rebuilt, retains its Norman tower and large Norman Font. Gourney Manor, a Jacobean house, stands opposite the church and perpetuates the name of Sir Thomas Gourney, who once owned the manor of West Harptree and was implicated in the murder of Edward II. Tilley Manor, a charming 17th century house, was the home of a celebrated Roman Catholic divine described by Wood, the 17th century historian, as " a most pious and

Chewton
Mendip.

Compton
Martin.

St. Michael's Church, Compton Martin.

seraphical person, who went beyond all of his time in pious devotion." Both manor-houses are now farms.

Charming though West Harptree is, East Harptree is even lovelier and more interesting with its wooded combe, its great cavern, its church and its castle ruins. The church has considerable Norman work, and a 16th century monument to Sir John Newton, with his twenty children decorously kneeling in a formal row. Two mansions stand at the other end of the village—Harptree Court and Eastwood, the latter of which Sir John Newton built out of the ruins of Richmont Castle, an old fortress of the Gourneys, which lies half a mile farther up in the hills, on an almost inaccessible cliff above the rock-bound gorge. The castle must have been almost impregnable in its day, and when it was held for the Empress Maud in 1138, Stephen only captured it by the ruse of a feigned repulse. Little now remains but entrenchments and fragments of the Keep. Its original owner, Azeline de Percheval, was so rapacious that he was known as The Wolf, and his son inherited not only the castle, but his father's cruelty, earning for himself the name of Lupellus—the Wolf cub— designations which give all too clear an idea of the iniquities which the old Castle must have seen.

At Chewton Mendip, three miles further on, the main road between Bristol and Wells is reached. Chewton Mendip commands superb views across the Chew Valley. The church dates from varying periods between the 12th and 15th centuries, and has a noble Tower. Among its specially interesting features is the " fryd stool " for those claiming sanctuary—the only one surviving in Somerset. There is also a fine 15th century altar tomb with the figures of a knight and lady. In the churchyard is one of the very few canopied crosses left standing in Somerset—a beautifully proportioned and carved example of 15th century work. Another rarity of the Church is the pre-Reformation plate. Chewton Priory stands near the Emborough road. It is the seat of Earl Waldegrave, and was once the home of the Countess

Waldegrave who was the friend of Edward Lear, author of the delightful nonsense rhymes which were a fore-runner of "Alice in Wonderland." It is a modern building occupying the site of an ancient Benedictine religious house, which was granted by Henry V to the Carthusian priory of Sheen when the alien priories were suppressed in England. Portions of the old causeway which connected the priory with the church are still traceable. A direct road climbs the hills and runs the five miles to Wells, passing Green Ore, where the old Roman road crosses the modern one at right angles.

The road from Wells to Radstock passes close beside the lonely little Emborough Lake, and runs through Chilcompton, picturesquely situated in a valley watered by the Somer rivulet, which forms a margin to the village street. Midsomer Norton, set beside the same brook, though the centre of Somerset's coal mining district, is a very attractive little town. The uninspiring modern Gothic church has a rather mutilated wooden effigy of a mailed knight, and a figure in a niche of the tower which is popularly supposed to be Charles II, who is said to have given the bells.

Radstock, also a mining centre, is near the ancient Fosse Way, and there are numerous tumuli and Roman remains in the neighbourhood. Several hundred yards of the Fosse Way near the town have been left undisturbed for fifteen centuries, except for surface metalling. Some years ago a small section was uncovered, and it was found that the original paving stones beneath the surface were still scored by marks of the Roman chariot wheels. The small original church of Radstock has been enlarged out of recognition, but preserves a curious bas-relief and a Norman font.

There are several delightful valleys converging on Radstock. Among the many interesting places in the neighbourhood of the town are Ston Easton, which has a small church with a richly sculptured Norman chancel arch, and a farmhouse said to have belonged to the Abbots of Glastonbury ; Farrington Gurney, a pleasant little village near a fine old manor-house ; and Kilmersdon, a picturesquely situated village

Croscombe Church.

Blagdon.

beneath the slopes of Ammerdown Park, the seat of Lord Hylton, a classical mansion designed by Wyatt. Kilmersdon church is a Perpendicular building with traces of Norman work, and the village is backed by a hill 800 ft. in height crowned by a memorial column with a glittering lantern, which is a conspicuous landmark for miles around.

THE EASTERN MENDIPS.

A particularly delightful road runs from Wells to Shepton Mallet, which is a centre for many beautiful and interesting places on Mendip and the West Pennard ridge. The first village reached on the way from Wells is the village of Dulcote, beyond which is Dinder, beside the little Sheppy brook in the shelter of Dulcote Hill. The church and village are set in the park of Dinder House, which stands directly in front of the church. A great yew tree in the churchyard is said to be 1,200 years old. The neighbouring village of Croscombe is a charming and quaint village which cherishes its relics of the past, and has several lovely old houses and a glorious church. About the middle of last century it was proposed to remove the village cross as an incumbrance, but the villagers gathered round and defended it from the demolishing party with the utmost vigour, waving a banner on which was written, " Be Faithful." When the demolishers were driven off the victory was consolidated by thirty men who bivouacked round the cross all night, their womenfolk making them beds of straw and kindling a large fire for their benefit. No further attempts to remove the cross have been made. The church is mainly of 15th century work, and has an unusual storeyed vestry which was once used as a meeting place of the seven guilds of Croscombe—the Young Men, the Maidens, the Webbers, the Fullers, the Hogglers, the Archers, and the Wives. There is some lovely woodwork in the church, and two fine brasses. Above the village is the charming Ham Wood, and in the near neighbourhood is Dungeon Farm,

which is believed to have been used by smugglers in days gone by for the concealment of their goods. It was from the orchard of this farm that Alfred Parsons, R.A., painted his famous picture " The Heart of Somerset," of which Glastonbury Tor is the central feature.

Beyond Croscombe are Bowlish and Darshill, which were once the centre for a huge silk industry, as evidenced by the ruins of nine large mills. There is every reason to believe this district was for centuries one of the largest weaving centres in England. The last of the mills closed down in 1920.

Shepton Mallet stands practically on the Fosse Way. Originally given by Ine to the Abbey of Glastonbury, it came into the hands of the Mallets from whom it takes its second name during the 12th century. The church has a glorious tower, and has a truly magnificent 15th century oak wagon roof, which is indisputably the most beautiful in the county, and consists of 350 carved panels, all of different design, with bosses and rosettes, and thirty-six angels. There is also a fine stone pulpit and an ancient font.

There is a notably lovely Cross in the market place about which some confusion of thought seems to prevail. Charles Pooley, in his " Old Crosses of Somerset," published in 1877, mentions that, subsequent to the repair of the central column, the whole of the 15th century cross was pulled down and a new one built on the old foundation in 1841. In innumerable books on Somerset subsequently published, the restoration of the central column is mentioned, but it is asserted that the beautiful octagonal shelter is the original one. As Mr. Pooley specifically mentions that the brass dated 1500, now restored to the market cross, was at the time of his visit in the possession of a local resident, and moreover reproduces an ancient drawing of the cross and another of the new structure which is similar but not identical, it appears that the later authors are mistaken in their conclusions. However, the present Cross is so rarely beautiful and so well proportioned that it is a possession of

The Cross,
Shepton Mallet.

Reading Desk,
Ditcheat Church.

which the town is justly proud. Until recently there was a quaint row of 15th century butchers' shambles, said to be the last mediæval shambles left in England, standing in the Market Place. They have been removed with the exception of a small section reconstructed on the east side as a memento, and even the survival has been the subject of many discussions with a view to its removal either completely or to another site.

A delightful place within easy reach of Shepton Mallet is the West Pennard ridge, which can be reached by way of Pilton, one of the loveliest villages of East Mendip. Pilton lies deep in a hollow of the hills and is bowered in trees and flowers. Its church is both spacious and interesting, and combines various periods of architecture from Norman to Perpendicular. Among its many interesting possessions are a curious old chest containing the remains of a 16th century cope which has been converted into an altar frontal ; a lovely screen; a fine brass chandelier dated 1749; an Easter Sepulchre with a representation of Our Lord cut in stone ; and a 15th century paten. Near the church is a noble cruciform barn which once belonged to the Abbots of Glastonbury. Pylle lies on the northern slopes of the ridge, three-quarters of a mile from the Fosse Way. There is a farmhouse opposite the church which was originally an Elizabethan manor-house of the Berkeley family. East Pennard lies a mile and a half from Pylle. It is a sequestered village of the utmost charm and simplicity. The Perpendicular church has some interesting features, and the neighbouring Wraxall Hill commands a fine view, particularly in the spring when the surrounding acres of apple orchards are in the full glory of their bloom. West Pennard has a splendid churchyard cross of late 15th century work. The curious earthwork known as Ponter's Ball is a couple of miles out of the town. The delightful village of Ditcheat lies two miles from East Pennard, on the opposite side of the Fosse Way. It has an interesting church, of Norman construction, enlarged by 14th and 15th century builders. Its chief features are a fine

pulpit and reading desk. A beautiful house built in the 15th century by John Gunthorpe, Dean of Wells, was enlarged in the 17th century to its present size. William Kingston a native of Ditcheat, achieved fame as "The Armless Wonder." Although born without arms he had unusually flexible feet which enabled him to feed and shave himself, write, plough, and follow all the pursuits of his age. He outshone all his normal neighbours in mental and physical pursuits. He lived from 1765 to 1831, married a London woman in romantic circumstances and had a completely normal family. A portrait of him is still cherished by one of his descendants. The neighbouring village of Evercreech has a fascinating vitality, born of its unobtrusive prosperity. It lies at the foot of Creech Hill, which is crowned by an encampment, and commands a fine view of Bruton. The road between Evercreech and Shepton Mallet passes through Cannard's Grave, a village whose name commemorates the days when a suicide was buried at four cross-roads with a stake through his body. A rambling 17th century inn stands at the junction of the modern road and the Fosse Way.

The road to Radstock is notable for Masbury Ring and Downside Abbey. The former is a large circular encampment, probably of British origin, though undoubtedly occupied by the Romans, as it lies on the Roman road running from Uphill to Old Sarum. The encampment crowns the highest point of the East Mendip range, and commands a wonderful panorama of the surrounding countryside. The view westward embraces Wells, Glastonbury Tor, the Blackdowns, Quantocks, Dunkery Beacon, and Bridgwater Bay. Eastward are the Wiltshire Downs and Alfred's Tower, whilst in the north Lansdown and Dundry Hills mark the positions of Bath and Bristol. Downside Abbey is the dominating interest of the village of Stratton-on-the-Fosse. The Abbey, which is both monastery and college, is a curious example of a completed cycle. When the monks were expelled from England they fled to France, and subsequently founded

a College at Douay in 1605, living there peaceably until 1837 when they were expelled from France, and returned to England to found Downside. The Abbey tower is a conspicuous landmark, as the locality itself stands high. The interior of the Abbey is of creamy-white Bath stone which gives a delightful impression of light and spaciousness. The whole building is a fine example of modern architecture, the lovely rose window, and the beautifully foliated capitals of the seven arches on either side of the choir being particularly well executed, whilst the statues are exceptionally attractive. The ancient parish church of Stratton-on-the-Fosse is near the Abbey buildings, but is completely overshadowed in interest by this impressive and inspiring modern church.

There are two equally interesting roads from Shepton Mallet to Frome. One runs by way of Doulting, which was the scene of St. Aldhelm's death in 709. As Bishop of Sherborne, he always performed his preaching expeditions through his diocese on foot, and at the age of 74 he arrived at Doulting one May morning, and died in the little wooden church which originally stood on the site of the present building. His body was borne away in solemn pageantry for burial at Malmsbury, memorial crosses being erected along the route wherever the corpse rested. A holy well still called by the name of St. Aldhelm is in the vicarage garden. The mutilated 15th century cross in the churchyard was probably a sanctuary cross, as Doulting enjoyed the privilege of being a place of refuge for debtors and criminals. There is an exceptionally large 14th century tithe barn in the village.

West Cranmore, which lies a mile from Doulting, has a delightful little church, and East Cranmore has a small modern church in close proximity to Cranmore House, which is sheltered by the hill crowned by Cranmore Tower, a square structure with projecting balconies which was built in 1861 as a prospect tower for the mansion.

Nunney is an adorable village—a tiny place which is perfection, having everything which the heart could desire to make it both lovely and interesting. Thatched cottages ;

some dignified old houses ; a picturesque bridge over a charming little brook ; a moated castle ; and a really lovely old church. Nunney Castle has recently been restored by the Office of Works. It has much in common with its near neighbour, Farleigh Hungerford Castle. Both were built during the reign of Edward III, on the same ground plan, though at Nunney lack of space has caused the four circular towers and their connecting walls to be cramped together. The confined space has resulted in a very unusual and interesting arrangement of the rooms, all of which can be traced, though the roof and the floors have long disappeared. During the Civil War it was held for the king, but after a determined resistance surrendered on terms to Fairfax. A rough sketch of the Castle, showing the original conical caps to each of the four towers, was made by a Royalist Officer, and is still preserved in Taunton museum. The adjoining church has a graceful tower, and contains very fine monuments to former owners of the castle and their wives, one of which is said to represent Sir John Delamere, who obtained the licence to crenelate in 1373.

The other road between Shepton Mallet and Frome passes near the lonely village of Downhead to Leigh-on-Mendip, which is close by the quarries which yielded the stone for Glastonbury Abbey and, possibly, for Wells Cathedral. Leigh church has a glorious tower and a splendid chancel roof. There is also a Norman font, some fine benches and very lovely 15th century glass. The village rests on the shoulder of a hill, just off the main road. Chantry, or Little Elm, a small village further along the main road, has an unusually beautiful little modern church designed by Sir Gilbert Scott. Beyond Chantry the road climbs from a little wooded dell to Whatley, a pretty little village of which Dean Church held the living for 19 years before his promotion to St. Paul's. He was buried in the churchyard. The church is a small Decorated building with a Norman doorway, and contains a 14th century altar-tomb. It is one of the few churches retaining some pre-Reformation Bells. Whatley

House was rebuilt in 1861, and its chief interest is now centred on the Roman pavement, the ruins of a bath, and the restored 13th century cross brought from Nunney, which are to be found in the grounds.

Frome is perched with seeming precariousness on the side of a steep hill. The town grew up round the church built by St. Aldhelm in the 8th century, but its long existence has been singularly tranquil. Only two events link Frome with national history—the death of King Eadred there in 955, and Monmouth's march through the town seven centuries later. The latter event was followed by swift retribution when Judge Jeffreys strung a dozen of the townsmen up in the market place for their sympathy with Monmouth's cause.

Unlike many restored churches, Frome has gained in interest by its reconstruction and redecoration in 1866, for though it is impossible not to regret the loss of some of its mediæval decorations, the church is now a notable example of Mid-Victorian ideas of decoration inspired by the Oxford Movement. A curious memorial tablet on the North Wall is said to commemorate the local attorney who destroyed the greater part of the ancient stained glass by order of the Cromwellian Government. Bishop Ken is buried in the churchyard beneath the East window, and his chalice is preserved in the Sacristry. The streets of Frome, although comparatively modern, have an attractively old-fashioned air, and there is one which is really old—Cheap Street, the ancient thoroughfare of the Chapmen, a quaint alley with a rill of water running down the middle. The Market Place is unusually spacious, and there is an interesting local museum.

A lovely walk from Frome leads to Vallis Vale, one of the chief beauty spots of the neighbourhood ; a place where two wooded valleys and two streams meet under the last rocks of Mendip.

Frome is set between the Mendip range and the Wiltshire Downs, and is a centre for many interesting places on the borders of Somerset and Wiltshire. The loveliest of the

Somerset villages in the near neighbourhood are Mells and Witham. The thatched and rose-bowered cottages of Mells are scattered bewitchingly along the banks of a stream, half-hidden in thick woods. Mells Manor is for ever linked with the old nursery rhyme of Jack Horner. The legend runs that Jack was a scullion in the Abbey Kitchen of Glastonbury at the time of the visitation of the monastery. The Abbot, in an effort to save his property, sent the deeds of some of his manors to a place of security, hidden in a pie, entrusting it to Horner. The boy, being hungry, cut open the pie and discovered the deed referring to Mells, which he promptly appropriated and so acquired the estate. This particular legend is, however, easily disproved, as the Horners were in possession of the manor long before this date. The Tudor manor-house was originally in the form of a letter H, but the north side has now disappeared, the stones having been used to build another mansion a short distance away. After a while yet another and more spacious mansion was built which still survives. The original house in which Charles I slept in 1644 was burned down a few years ago. Mells church is a mellow old building with a noble tower in the late Perpendicular style. There is a mural tablet designed by Burne-Jones with the emblem of a peacock on the North wall, and an interesting octagonal vestry. The first name on the war memorial in the village is that of Raymond Asquith, son of the late Lord Oxford and Asquith. There are some ancient camps in the neighbourhood, and a building of the Roman period has been discovered at Beech Grove.

Witham Friary was the first Carthusian monastery founded in England. It lies in a valley under the Wiltshire Ridge, and was one of three founded by Henry II in penance for the murder of Thomas à Becket. The first priors proving incompetent, the famous St. Hugh of Avalon was brought over from France to reorganise the Friary, which he soon accomplished with success. He was one of the most charming personalities of his time, and afterwards became Bishop of

Church and Manor House, Mells.

Priddy Green.

Priddy Church.

Lincoln. The little church used by the lay-brothers now serves for the parish church. It is an attractive 12th century building which, though small, is on noble lines. The village reading room is believed to have been the monastic dove-cote, and is the only structure surviving from the domestic establishment of the Friary. Among other fascinating places in the neighbourhood of Frome are Great Elm, where there is a small and quaint church ; Orchardleigh Park, which has a delightful little 14th century church restored by Sir Gilbert Scott, standing on a small island in a lake ; Lullington, a quiet and pretty little village with a curious church containing a wonderfully carved Norman font and other Norman work ; and Beckington, notable as the birth-place of Bishop Beckington, which is a beautiful village with a magnificent church containing very fine monuments. There is a many-gabled stone house with mullioned windows in the village, known as The Castle, and a picturesque manor-house known as The Abbey. Berkley, on the Wiltshire border, has a classical 18th century church, a very unusual sight in a country village. Berkley House dates from the time of William III.

Alfred's Tower, reached from Frome by a delightful drive by way of the Wiltshire village of Maiden Bradley, although on the Wiltshire Stourton estate, is, appropriately enough, in the Somersetshire parish of Brewham, and marks the site where King Alfred erected his standard in A.D.879 against the Danish invaders. This curious triangular tower, which was built in 1772, stands on ground 854 ft. above sea level and rises to a height of 160 ft., commanding wide views across the counties of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire. There is a flight of 222 steps leading to the summit of the tower.

THE HEART OF MENDIP.

The only village of any size in the lonely heart of Mendip is Priddy, a place so ancient that it cherishes a lovely legend which tells that Christ himself once walked there as a boy,

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having accompanied his uncle on one of his voyages to Britain. The story is said to be a modern invention, but as its source cannot be traced the visitor can indulge in the belief if he chooses. The little church is mainly Perpendicular, and has several interesting features, including an 11th century font and two pulpits, the 15th century stone pulpit having apparently been abandoned in Jacobean times for a more spacious contemporary structure. Priddy Fair is the most famous on Mendip. It is said to owe its origin to the Black Death, which so ravaged the towns and villages at the foot of Mendip that the itinerant chapmen were forced to sell their wares in the pure air of the heights.

The Kennels of the Mendip Hunt are also to be found at Priddy. It was near here that King Edmund was hunting when he narrowly escaped death by falling over the Cheddar Cliffs, and to this very day the cunning foxes on Mendip frequently escape in the deep caverns of Cheddar Gorge. Nowhere is fox-hunting more thrilling than on Mendip. Hard riding and wonderful sport are the order of the day, for the foxes know all the great gorges and frequently lead the Hunt a breathlessly exciting chase over the sides of Ebbor and Wookey Hole, where, though cautious followers can find a fairly safe way round, the bolder spirits sometimes find themselves in more peril than the fox!

Priddy Green lies in the centre of the Roman lead-mining district, and there are innumerable prehistoric burial mounds and caves in the neighbourhood. The miners on Mendip were a community apart governed by their own laws, which were handed down by word of mouth, from time immemorial, and observing customs which dated back to pagan times. In 1470 the Crown held a great Court of Arbitration at a place called the Forge, which is said to have been attended by 10,000 people, who gave their consent to a list of regulations which minutely defined the rights of the lords of the manor and the individual miners. At a recent great gathering of Folkdancers held in the garden of the Bishop's Palace at Wells, some of the Priddy villagers

Meet of the Mendip Hunt
at Wookey Hole.

Burnham-
on-Sea.

came down from the hills to perform their traditional dances. Unlike the other performers, theirs was no revival of an ancient art, but the demonstration of dances which have never died out.

It is near Priddy that one of the principal sources of the Axe can be found—after much search, so lonely and so remote is the region where it wells up from the ground only to plunge down a fern-draped hole on its subterranean journey to Wookey Hole. The surrounding countryside is honeycombed with these swallets, the most famous of which is Eastwater. The cavern into which this funnel discharges its waters is said to be one of the most hazardous and difficult labyrinths that the cave-hunter can find in the county. Another famous swallet is the Devil's Punch Bowl, a large depression in a field a mile or two away to the north.

Charterhouse village lies about two and a half miles from Priddy, and is a centre for three prehistoric earthworks and a fine Roman camp. There are distinct traces of the Roman trackway in the neighbourhood, and many of the old Roman workings of the lead mines can still be discovered. Near Charterhouse Bottom are curious miniature gorges where, though it is twelve miles from the coast and upwards of 800 feet above sea level, it is possible to pick up a wonderful collection of marine fossils in the shortest stay. These fossils were deposited there when Mendip rocks were formed at the bottom of the sea, afterwards rising above the water as the result of some upheaval in ages long past.

Everywhere on Mendip the air is remarkably pure, but on these heights it is even more invigorating, as the experience of the chapmen during the Black Death showed, and the cures achieved by the large and attractive-looking sanatorium for consumptives at Nordrach-upon-Mendip would appear to prove that it is no less healthful in the present day.

THE NORTH EAST COAST OF SOMERSET.

CHAPTER VIII

The coast resorts of East Somerset are an interesting contrast to those of West Somerset, for though they have their roots as deeply in the past, they are all completely modern in their present-day appearance—sunny, spacious towns where enterprise has seized upon the supreme fact of the extraordinarily healthy climate of this stretch of coast, and has utilised every natural advantage in planning up-to-date resorts which are as popular for holidays as they are attractive as tourist centres.

Though little is known of the origin of Burnham, the 13th century parish church and an ancient lighthouse remain to remind the visitor that this essentially modern town is of ancient foundation, whilst the delightful little church of Berrow is a proof that the village which merges with Burnham has had an equally long existence. Burnham, with all its provision for the amusements of its guests, is essentially a health resort—a place where out-door sport reigns supreme above all other attractions. Seven miles of golden sands

ensure perfect happiness for children and bathers, and the golf course is famous.

One of the greatest charms of Burnham and Berrow in the eyes of visitors is the fact that they are developing parallel with the seashore, instead of inland, with the result that no houses or shops are far from the sea-front, whilst the level site is particularly appreciated by elderly visitors and invalids. Those who prefer hills find Brean Down a few miles north of the town, and the long line of the Mendips, which shelters Burnham from cold winds, gives ample opportunities for hill-climbing. The Marine Parade is attractively laid out with gardens, but its chief glory is the wonderful view it commands—westward across the estuary of the Parret to the Quantocks and Exmoor, dominated by Dunkery Beacon, northward to Brean Down and the Mendips, and seaward to the coast of Wales. The Parade stretches from the estuary of the Brue to the golf course laid out on the sandhills of Berrow. There is a fine paddling and model boating pool on the sands, and some charming public gardens and sports grounds in the town.

The parish church is in the Perpendicular style, and contains an altar piece in coloured marbles which has had an eventful history. It was originally designed by Inigo Jones and executed by Grinling Gibbons for the chapel of Whitehall. When the chapel was burnt down this reredos was saved and given by Queen Anne to Westminster Abbey, where it was set up over the high altar—and was obviously entirely out of place. Before the Coronation of George IV it was taken down and given to Burnham Church, at the petition of Bishop King of Rochester, then Canon of Westminster, who had been vicar of Burnham. The church, whose West Tower leans several feet to the north, occupies a fine position in the centre of the esplanade.

The many amusements provided by Burnham during the summer months include a pierrot troupe, concerts in the spacious Pavilion, a cinema, and an orchestra, whilst facilities for sport include fresh water fishing in the River Brue and

neighbouring ponds. A great carnival and fete lasting two or three days is held every year during the first week in August.

Whilst Burnham-on-Sea during summer is a paradise for children, and attractive to those who like an ample provision for sports and amusements, it is equally congenial to those in search of peace, for the shortest ramble takes the visitor into an unspoiled countryside, and the long stretch of sand-dunes reaching from Berrow to the foot of Brean Down is as lonely as the most confirmed seeker after solitude could wish. Burnham's summer season of amusements lasts from about Whitsun until the end of September, but with the departure of the amusement caterers, Burnham's attractiveness to visitors is by no means exhausted. All through the winter the mild, healthy climate attracts holiday-makers who are charmed with the peace of the sunny little town which, throughout the winter months, is a perfect place for a rest cure. There are innumerable delightful walks in the near neighbourhood, and all the beauty spots of North and West Somerset are within easy reach.

Berrow church, set among the grass-clad sand-dunes of the golf course, is an attractive little building which has an extraordinarily clean look, as though newly swept and garnished, though it is an ancient building and contains a small pulpit and gallery dated 1637.

Both Burnham and Berrow are growing increasingly popular not only as holiday and tourist centres, but as a residential district, and the many fine houses and gardens in the long Berrow Road testify to the attraction Burnham has for those whose means and leisure allow them to exercise discrimination in choosing a home.

Burnham claims that its wonderful sunsets drew Turner there, and although there are people who dispute this claim, the gorgeous light and colour effects are certainly sufficiently brilliant to have impressed the great painter, and are no small part of the town's charm in our own day.

Beyond Berrow the sand-dunes stretch away to the foot of Brean Down and the mouth of the River Axe, beyond which

Weston-super-Mare, Sands and Winter Gardens Pavilion.

The Two Bays, Weston-super-Mare.

lies Weston-super-Mare, reached by a ferry across the Axe at Uphill, or by a bridge inland at Bleadon.

Gay, friendly Weston-super-Mare, welcoming all its visitors, and proud to be known as the largest holiday resort between Lancashire and Land's End, is frankly delighted to be a popular holiday town. Instead of angling after exclusiveness, it bends all its energies towards making itself ever more attractive to holiday-makers and tourists, pursuing the policy indicated in its Civic motto of "Ever Forward," and ceaselessly endeavouring to anticipate the demands of its guests. The natural result is that not all the crowds of people who flock there summer and winter alike can "spoil" Weston-super-Mare in the eyes of the discerning.

This insistent charm of Weston-super-Mare is in large measure due to the natural beauty of its setting, cradled in the arms of wooded Worlbury Hill and the grass-clad height of Brean Down, but man's ingenuity and enterprise have enhanced this natural beauty without spoiling its original loveliness. The comparatively uninteresting valley between the hills has been transformed with spacious streets, fine houses, and lovely gardens into an attractive modern town. The two-mile long promenade is laid out with wide lawns and gay flower-beds, and commands magnificent views of the long line of the Mendips, the distant Quantocks, the islands of Steep Holme and Flat Holme, and the Welsh coast. This Marine Parade, though flanked by sands on one side and houses and hotels on the other, is yet subtly different from similar promenades in other popular resorts, for at one end it is dominated by pine-clad Worlbury Hill, and at the other, delightfully and unexpectedly, it merges into a natural wood which in spring is carpeted with a mist of bluebells, and later is gay with bright summer wildflowers.

In a corner of the great Bay of Weston, sheltered by Worlbury Hill, is the charming little Madeira Cove, where the rockery is brilliant with sub-tropical shrubs and flowers which flourish luxuriantly in the mild climate. From there a coast road skirts the base of Worlbury Hill to

Kewstoke and Sand Bay. Weston's Parks are a great part of her charm—Grove Park with its lawns, and tree-shaded flower-beds ; Clarence Park with its brilliant flowers, Bowling Greens, and Tennis Courts, and its County Cricket ground ; Ashcombe Park, another haunt of sportsmen ; the Prince Consort Gardens overlooking the Old Pier and commanding wide views across the Channel ; and the woods on Worlbury Hill.

Much fun has been poked at Weston's " mud " which is, however, only visible at low tide. The joke is one of those which Englishmen so frequently invent when they have a special affection for any place or person, and is more a tribute to Weston's " personality," and the hold it has on the affections of visitors, than an intended slur on the town, for those who know the resort know also that there is such a wide swathe of glorious golden sands between the promenade and the commencement of the mud that it in no way detracts from the amenities of Weston-super -Mare in the eyes of children and sun-bathers, whilst the exhalation of iodine from the mud is said to contribute largely to the exceptional healthiness of Weston-super-Mare's climate.

Weston's provision for the amusement of its visitors is on a lavish scale. The Marine Lake has boats of various types, with a popular feature in the specially constructed harbour for children's paddle-boats. A paddling pond has also been built for the children, with a depth gradually increasing from ground level to 18 inches. Bathing tents and enclosures, and a splendid diving raft, are also provided. There is a model-yacht pond ; and a day nursery on the Parade, where parents can leave their children to play under the care of a trained nurse. There are, of course, bands, concert parties, dances, cinemas and innumerable other forms of entertainment in the various halls of Weston, but the finest place of amusement is the Winter Gardens Pavilion, which was only opened a few years ago, and embodies all the most up-to-date ideas of lighting, decoration, and comfort. There is a magnificent ballroom, and the delightful,

The Marine Lake, Weston-super-Mare.

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sheltered Italian Gardens make a place to linger in at any time of the year. Weston-super-Mare has two piers, and provides facilities for every form of sport.

When Dr. Johnson's friend Mrs. Piozzi visited Weston-super-Mare in 1819, it was a mere cluster of fishermen's huts, but even then the foundations of its reputation for healthiness were being laid, and she wrote enthusiastically that "the breezes here are most salubrious," but although Weston is so obviously a town of modern growth, no place on the coast has a greater interest for antiquarians. In the north-west corner of Worlbury Hill is one of the most remarkable camps in Somerset, important not only because of its peculiar structure, but also because the human and other remains throw more light on the nature and state of civilisation of its inhabitants than any other similar prehistoric camp in England. The camp is an oval enclosure of about 10½ acres, and its defences are interesting in their display of all the arts of fortification known to the prehistoric inhabitants. There are 93 artificial pits, the most curious feature of the camp, varying from six to ten feet across, and from four to eight feet in depth, and believed to be the underground basement or store house to huts which were built over them. Skulls, charred woodwork and fragments of grain have been found in these hollows, and much of the story of the camp has been reconstructed from these fragments. It seems that the camp must have been constructed about 300 B.C., and inhabited continuously until the garrison were defeated a few years after the first landing of the Claudian expedition in A.D. 43. There is little doubt that the Britons of the West made their last desperate stand against the advancing Romans in this camp, and the remains of human skeletons show that they fought desperately, and sold their lives dearly before they were overpowered.

Brean Down, the last outcrop of the Mendips before they plunge into the sea and finally expire in the Holmes, is another unusual addition to the amenities of Weston, with its fascinating bird life and rare wild plants. The two islands

which are so conspicuous from the Marine Parade at Weston are of considerable interest, and frequent steamship excursions are run from the old pier. Steep Holme, which towers to a height of 400 feet, is about five miles from Weston. A mile and a half in circumference, it has an historical interest as the refuge of Githa, the mother of King Harold, who died there after the defeat of her son at the Battle of Hastings. There are also the remains of a 14th century priory built by the third Lord Berkeley, and a discarded fortress. Flat Holme lies seven miles from Weston, and is the same size as Steep Holme. Its lighthouse, which was built in 1737, is 156 feet high. Three mounds in the island are traditionally said to be the graves of three of the four knights who slew Thomas à Becket.

Apart from its many attractions for holiday-makers, Weston-super-Mare is supreme as a touring centre for Somerset. The glorious Cheddar Gorge and the scarcely less famous Burrington Combe are 12 miles away, whilst the enchanting Wookey Hole Caves are only 18 miles away, with the splendid old cathedral city of Wells but two miles further, and all the delightful countryside of the Mendips, Sedgemoor, Vale of Taunton Deane, and the Quantocks within easy reach, and even Exmoor within the compass of a day's trip. Innumerable picturesque little villages are within a few miles of Weston, and no less beautiful and interesting manor-houses, set in a countryside of soft green beauty. Walks and drives alike are a delight in the neighbourhood of Weston, which so far from encroaching on the countryside, melts almost imperceptibly into green fields and woodlands. One of the most famous as well as the most interesting places in the neighbourhood of Weston-super-Mare is Worspring Priory, which is reached through Kewstoke Woods by a walk of three-and-a-half miles. These woods are part of Weston's natural attractions, and spread all over Worlbury Hill and along the road to the Priory. Kewstoke Church is a picturesque building illustrating successive styles of architecture. The south door is Norman and

Weston-super-Mare.

Worspring Priory,

evedon.

Clevedon
Court.

there is an Early English lancet in the chancel, with a font of the same period. The East window and those on the north are Decorated, whilst the tower and the clerestory are Perpendicular. There is a fine stone 15th century pulpit and some old glass. Less than a century ago a figure in the north wall of the church was found to conceal a broken wooden cup stained with human blood which is supposed to be that of St. Thomas à Becket. It is conjectured that the cup was brought from Worspring Priory, and it is now in the Taunton Museum.

Worspring Priory was founded in 1210 by William Courtenay, a grandson of Reginald Fitzurse, one of the murderers of St. Thomas à Becket, and was popularly supposed to have been built in expiation of the crime, particularly as the monastery was dedicated in part to the Archbishop. It was only a small Priory, and after the Dissolution the Church was converted into a dwelling house, whilst the greater part of the remaining buildings were allowed to fall into ruin. A considerable amount of excavation in recent years has revealed the foundations of the ruined buildings, whilst the great barn, chantry, court-room and the Church tower, are in a fine state of preservation. The buildings stand in a sheltered grassy hollow near the seashore and together with the neighbouring village of Worle are a favourite haunt of picnic parties from Weston-super-Mare.

The country invades the town so resolutely at Clevedon that there are moments when it is difficult to remember in Clevedon's streets that they are not remote country lanes—a most attractive and unusual thing in a holiday town. Though the old village of Clevedon lies two miles inland, grouped round the glorious old manor-house of Clevedon Court, and the modern seaside resort is rapidly increasing, Clevedon has never allowed a craze for popularity to overwhelm its personality. Nothing is allowed to encroach on the ancient buildings which embody the town's claims to literary and historical associations. The coastline is

broken into three delightful bays by picturesque cliffs, woods invade the very heart of the town, which is strung out with a charming informality between the seashore and Clevedon Court, and Dial Hill and some lesser heights add to the unusual outline of the town.

The grey old church, noble in its rugged simplicity, dominates the whole town from its commanding position on a grassy hilltop, and looks seaward as though brooding over the lines of Tennyson's "In Memoriam," which was written in memory of the poet's friend, Arthur Hallam, who is buried in the church with his father, Henry Hallam the historian. Founded in the 11th century and partly rebuilt when Clevedon Court was rising from its foundations, the church has much to interest the archæologist and several details to appeal to the less learned tourist—a fine alabaster slab of a knight in 15th century plate armour, and a quaint little altar tomb with an effigy of a child. The pretty little rose-bowered cottage in which Samuel Taylor Coleridge spent his honeymoon in 1795, and which he described in one of his poems, is carefully preserved unaltered but for the addition of a marble tablet recording his visit.

Clevedon Court, which lies about two miles from the seashore, is not only one of the most charming manor-houses in England, but certainly one of the most perfect examples of a manor-house of Edward II's reign, and is almost unique as an example of a manor house inhabited continuously for six hundred years. Originally built by one of the de Clevedon family, it has been enlarged in successive centuries, but the porch with the groove for a portcullis, the great hall, and the kitchen, survive almost untouched. The principal alterations were made in the Tudor and Stuart times, and added to the picturesqueness and comfort of the mansion without detracting in the least from its interest. It has been the seat of the Elton family for over 200 years, and gathered its chief literary associations during this period. The Elton family have always been gifted with literary ability, and enjoyed the friendship of such famous

writers as Thackeray and Tennyson, both of whom stayed in the mansion. Thackeray took the Court as the original of " Castlewood " in his novel of " Henry Esmond," parts of which he wrote whilst staying there. The mansion itself, with its gables, its mullioned windows, its picturesque chimneys, bowered with climbing plants, framed in a setting of old-world gardens with clipped yew hedges, and backed by a tree-clad hill, is one of the loveliest in England, apart from its historical, archæological and literary interest.

There are many charming walks in the neighbourhood of Clevedon, particularly those to the four picturesque villages of the Gordano country, and the ruined castle of Walton-in-Gordano. This delightful, ivy-clad ruin, so charming to the lover of the picturesque, is little else but an irritation to the antiquarians, who cannot agree over its origin. The most reasonable theory is that it was built in the reign of James I on the plan of a mediæval fortress. The once ruined church of Walton has been rebuilt in a style said to have been modelled on the ancient building, to meet the requirements of Walton-by-Clevedon, a modern suburb of the popular holiday resort.

Portishead, six miles north of Clevedon, well deserves its increasing popularity, for it has planned and worked unceasingly in a single-minded endeavour to make itself attractive to holiday-makers and tourists. The town is set on a green headland running out into the Bristol Channel at the point where the River Avon flows into the great Severn estuary, and is surrounded by breezy downs and woods which are as lonely and unspoiled as in the days when the Romans raised the great bank which marks the ancient tidemark—nearly half a mile from the present shore, and built the Camp, which is still to be seen on Wood Hill. At that time Portishead was an important port for exporting the minerals from the Mendips.

It was until recently believed that the great fortified Saxon earthwork known as the Wansdyke had its western termination at Portishead, but recent research makes this doubtful,

though there is conclusive evidence that the port continued to exist with fluctuating importance, all through the centuries. The parish church dates from the time of the Normans, with later additions, and its list of incumbents dates from 1320. With its splendid Perpendicular tower—the finest in the Gordano district—its pre-Reformation sanctus bells, its curious gallery, its original Norman font, and its other unusual features, the church is of exceptional interest. There is a lovely mediæval cross in the churchyard, and a stone in memory of Victor Halliwell, the engineer who met his death at Windermere, in company with Sir Henry Segrave. Nearby is another, and even more attractive relic of the past—a delightful Elizabethan mansion of mellow 16th century brickwork, with a hexagonal turret. Capenore Court is an equally lovely Tudor farmhouse, and Portishead House is traditionally supposed to have harboured French spies during the Napoleonic wars, and even to have been visited by the Emperor himself!

Chief among the documented historical events of the town is the fight for possession of Battery Point during the Civil War, when the Royalists were compelled to yield to Parliamentary warships after a four-day battle. Twenty years later James II inspected the fort, which figured in national events again during the Napoleonic wars, and even during the recent Great War, though now dismantled and turned into the chief beauty spot of the town. Band concerts are held there during the holiday season, there is a delightful golf putting course, and a tea-room.

Although Portishead prides itself on offering a quiet and healthy holiday to those in search of peace, and a haven of refuge as a residential centre, it does not disdain to offer up-to-date sports and amusements, and charming recreation grounds and parks have been laid out, with a Marine Lake in the recreation ground bordering the Esplanade, where boating may be enjoyed. Hidden away behind wooded hills lie the Docks which, though not on the large scale which would imply the grime and ugliness so frequently associated

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Clifton
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Church,
ristol.

with Dockland, nevertheless brings Portishead a prosperity which has enabled the town to embark on all the schemes of improvement which have made Portishead such an attractive place for residence or holiday.

Portishead has a modern Naval College to which visitors are admitted, when they can see the curious " Lighthouse on Legs " at Black Nore Point.

The town is in the heart of the Gordano district, and one of the most delightful of the many walks in the near neighbourhood is to Nightingale Valley, a place as charming as its name implies—a fairyland of woods and wild flowers where innumerable nightingales are to be heard.

BRISTOL
AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

CHAPTER IX.

Although Bristol is no longer officially a part of Somerset, the whole existence of the great West Country port has been so bound up with that of the county, and it is so excellent a centre for exploring the whole of north-east Somerset, that no book on Somerset would be complete without some description of Bristol and its surroundings.

There are still a great number of people who are uncertain whether Bristol is in Somerset or Gloucestershire, but Edward III solved the problem as long ago as 1373 by granting it a charter which constituted the port a county in itself. A city which was great and powerful enough to merit such a concession could hardly fail to have a history full of incident, and Bristol's story is a many coloured web into which is woven tales of hardihood and daring by sea, of siege and battle by land, lightened by the wealth and hospitality of her citizens, and the brilliant pageantry attendant on numerous royal visits. The enormous wealth of

Bristol's merchant princes in the Middle Ages was largely utilised in public works, and in spite of the damage done during the Bristol Reform Riots of 1831, there are many fine old mediæval buildings surviving, which make Bristol a place of more than common interest.

The Cathedral, which was originally the abbey church of the monastery of St. Augustine, dates from 1142. When Abbot Knowle reconstructed the Norman building in 1306 he displayed endless ingenuity in overcoming the difficulties in carrying out his novel ideas. It is unique among the greater churches of England in having aisles as high as the central portion, a plan which gives a dignity and spaciousness to the interior rarely achieved so fully in Gothic architecture. In the aisle and chancel walls are eight elaborately foliated recesses—another most unusual feature—several of which contain effigies in a good state of preservation though the two earliest date from the 13th century. The fourteenth century choir is to this day the wonder of the great and lovely building, rivalling even the beautifully proportioned and richly decorated Norman chapter house. Little remains of the cloisters, and the Abbot's House, which was used as the Bishop's Palace when the monastery became a cathedral, was burnt down during the riots. A portion of the Norman crypt survives beneath the ruins, and two Norman doorways still stand in College Square. One of the most remarkable survivals is the splendid old Abbey gateway, which is a perfect specimen of Norman work at the period of its richest ornamentation.

Rivalling the Cathedral in interest is the stately parish church of St. Mary Redcliffe, which has evoked admiration from every visitor for many centuries and is still " the fairest of all churches," as Leyland described it—and he was certainly competent to judge, for he had wandered on his ambling horse over the length and breadth of England for many years, visiting every church in the land. Half the strange, tragic life of the boy poet Chatterton was spent in the Muniment Room of St. Mary's, at first rummaging

happily among the ancient documents stored there, and afterwards in planning and writing the Rowley Poems. The mediæval atmosphere of the richly carved and decorated room, with its great ironbound chests and musty parchments must have played a great part in inspiring the sickly boy to undertake his extraordinary task of forging the documents which so baffled the experts of his day.

St. Mary's also had associations with another of the arts. The 18th century vicar of the church was a friend and admirer of Handel, who is believed to have composed some of his music there, and certainly played the organ on various occasions to gratify his friend. After his death the vicar erected a " Handel window " to his memory.

One of the most beautiful Gothic buildings in Bristol is St. Mark's, once the chapel of Gaunt's Hospital, founded in the 13th century. It has been the chapel of the Mayor and his civic colleagues since 1722, and contains a chantry chapel which is a perfect gem of mellow Tudor architecture. The whole of the interior, though a medley of varying periods of architecture, retains a sense of unity which strikes no jarring note.

All the mediæval churches in Bristol are well worth a visit. That of St. John is particularly interesting, as it is the only remaining example of the curious use to which the worthy and economical citizens of Bristol put their city gates when they became obsolete as defensive works: the base of the church tower is formed of the ancient archway. In other cases the church or chancel was placed over the archway, but these have vanished in the process of modernisation.

The beautiful old 16th century hospital of St. Peter's with its gables, projecting windows and half-timbered front, although it has experienced some strange vicissitudes in ownership, has retained all its original charm. The Red Lodge is another fine specimen of 16th century work, with wonderful carved doorways and a gorgeously decorated interior. One of the best of the old houses remaining in the shopping quarter is the picturesque Old Dutch House, of which the framework is said to have been made in Holland

University Tower
and Art Gallery,
Bristol.

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atehouse,
ristol.

Bristol
Cathedr

during the reign of William and Mary. Relics of other houses abound, and many almshouses of ancient foundation provide examples of varying periods of domestic architecture. Unfortunately, little remains of the historic castle but a portion of the walls. From the time of its erection early in the 12th century, the Norman stronghold played an important part in English history. The tale of its royal guests is too long to be told here, whilst the sad story of the many noble prisoners who languished in its dungeons makes tragic reading. It could even boast two Royal captives—Stephen, during a temporary reverse in his struggle for the English crown ; and the less fortunate Eleanor of Brittany, the luckless niece of King John who, after enduring 18 years captivity, died in the castle. So vast was the castle, and so strong—the walls were 25 ft. thick—that there is little doubt the " verie flower of all the towers of England " as a contemporary chronicler described it, would have stood in all its might to-day if Cromwell had not ordered it to be razed to the ground.

Apart from Bristol's mediæval relics, there are some fine modern buildings housing the more perishable treasures of the past. The Council House contains some interesting paintings, many beautifully illuminated old books, and the splendid decorative plate and regalia of the Corporation, much of it of ancient and exquisite workmanship. The Municipal Library houses a most comprehensive collection of books, and the Art Gallery and Museum are an endless source of instruction and pleasure, and are filled with relics of Bristol's history, and its many famous citizens, chief among whom were the Cabots and Mistress Dorothy Hazard. The Cabot Tower on Brandon Hill commemorates the discovery of America by the Cabots, who sailed from Bristol in 1497, and the magnificent buildings of Bristol University are a striking proof that Bristol is as progressive and enterprising in modern times as in the Middle Ages.

With all its flourishing trade, Bristol is still a pleasant town in which to linger, not only for its historic buildings,

but for the beauty of its surroundings. The famous Downs creep so close that they are almost part of the city itself—vast, breezy expanses of close-cropped grass, which in spring are glorious with the fragrant bloom of countless may trees. The residential quarter of Bristol, too, is exceptionally beautiful. Clifton stands on the site of British Caer-Oder, overlooking the deep gorge cleft by the shining river Avon. The river winds its way to the sea between steep, tree-clad banks, broken by precipitous limestone cliffs. A broad road at the foot of one of the banks follows the course of the stream—a fascinating road, which opens up a hundred delightful vistas in its endless turning and twisting. There are many beautiful cliff paths leading to places of interest in the neighbourhood. Giant's Cave, the reputed site of a mediæval hermit's chapel, is reached from the Observatory near the Suspension Bridge by a tunnel cut through the cliff. Blaise Castle and woods, mentioned by Jane Austen in "Persuasion," is now the property of the Bristol Corporation, and is linked up with the city by tram and motor-bus services. Numerous famous people have been associated with Clifton, including the Empress Eugenie, who received part of her education at a house in Royal York Crescent; Hannah More; Sydney Smith; and Walter Savage Landor.

Clifton is also noted for its Zoological gardens, its educational establishments, its hot springs, and its attractions as a health resort.

One of the most popular districts within easy reach of Bristol is the charming Gordano Country. Its curious name dates back to the 13th century when it was spelt "Gordene" and probably referred to its triangular shape. It is a countryside of smiling pasture-lands, delightful woods, and fine old manor-houses. The road to Clevedon crosses the Suspension Bridge and passes the thickly wooded Nightingale Valley which hides the remains of Stokeleigh Camp, a Roman fortification which was one of a series of entrenchments which defended the fords of the river. The Portishead

route to Clevedon passes near the village of Abbotsleigh and Leigh Court, and Pill, a quaint little place which is a haunt of Bristol pilots. Easton-in-Gordano, though a pleasant little village, has nothing of antiquarian interest beyond the Perpendicular tower of its church, which is all of the original building left by the restorers, but Portbury, bowered in apple orchards, is a place where many Roman remains have been found. It was the birthplace of Lord Chief Justice Coke. The spacious church has some fine Norman work, and the remains of a mediæval Priory have been utilised as a parish school.

Clapton-in-Gordano is a delightful village with an ancient church and mansion embodying 13th century work, set at the foot of a wooded hill. The house has one of the most striking pieces of domestic woodwork in existence—an old archway of 13th century workmanship forming an entrance to the buttery. The church also has some fine woodwork and several interesting features. A lane from Clapton leads past Naish House, at which Bishop Ken was a frequent visitor, to Wraxhall, whose charming church makes an attractive picture with its background of a wooded hill.

Weston-in-Gordano has a picturesque little church with an Early English tower and a unique gallery over the porch. There is a tomb in the church to Sir Richard Percyvale, who rebuilt the church as it now stands in the 15th century, and another in the churchyard to a 12th century Percyvale who was a crusader. The Percyvales ruled at Weston for six hundred years, but their old home has long since disappeared.

Delightful Walton-in-Gordano with its picturesque castle is so close to Clevedon that it is rapidly becoming the resort's most popular suburb.

Beyond the wooded ridge which shelters the Gordano district lies Tickenham, which has an interesting church with some Norman work, and some 13th century effigies supposed to be the Berkeleys, whose descendants built the manor-house, which is now a farm. Above the village is Cadbury Camp, in a commanding position overlooking the

Nailsea Valley and the Gordano country. This Camp is frequently confused with the more important Cadbury Castle near Ilchester, but though interesting, it cannot rival the glamour of the supposed site of Camelot. The Camp covers seven acres, and Roman coins have been found within the double line of ramparts and ditches.

Nailsea Court, an Elizabethan manor-house which is now a farm, lies some distance to the south of the village, and nearby is Chelvey Court, an early Jacobean mansion of the Tyntes, which has also become a farm. Between these and the sea are Kenn, the original home of Bishop Ken's family, with its church containing a quaint monument to Christopher Ken, who died in 1593 ; Kingston Seymour and Wick St. Lawrence, remote villages of the marshland, whose churches have several interesting features ; and the fascinating village of Yatton, whilst south of the River Yeo are Congresbury, and Puxton, which was originally a chapelry of Banwell.

Yatton church is a noble building of 14th and 15th century work on a Norman plan. It has a 15th century alabaster monument to Sir Richard Newton and his wife, and under a foliated recess, male and female effigies dating from the 14th century. There is also a beautiful mortuary chapel to Sir John Newton, who died in 1487. Near the church is a fine 15th century rectory and some ancient almshouses. The River Yeo was once navigable as far as the neighbouring village of Wimberham, where the remains of a Roman villa and boathouse have been discovered. Congresbury, which lies two miles from Yatton, has a romantic origin, for it is said St. Congar, a hermit who was a son of the Emperor of Byzantium, stole away from the luxurious court life to avoid a marriage arranged by his father, and after wandering through Europe, came to rest beside the River Yeo and built a tiny wattle oratory to the Blessed Trinity. Later, having been endowed by King Ine of Wessex with the land, he built a house of twelve canons. In his old age he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where he died. His body is said to have been brought back to

St. Peter's Hospital,
Bristol.

The Nave,
Bristol
Cathedral.

Congresbury for burial, but his grave has never been discovered. Congresbury is one of those lovely villages which seem the natural setting for such a charming legend, and has a most beautiful and interesting church. The mediæval parsonage was probably built by Bishop Beckington.

Within easy reach of Yatton and Congresbury is Brockley, which lies at the foot of a delightful line of hills. It is a small and picturesque country village with a charmingly situated little church, and an ancient court house. It is close to the entrance to the far-famed Brockley Combe, which inspired Coleridge to write a poem during his visit in 1795. The fairy-like wooded glen cuts deep into the heart of a range of hills which is riddled with lovely valleys—Goblin Combe, wilder and more solitary, is scored out of Broadfield Down, and on the south side lies the lovely Vale of Wrington. Wrington village was for many years the home of Hannah More and her sisters. It was here that William Wilberforce, whilst on a visit, inspired her to take up the work of instituting schools for Mendip miners' children. She died in 1833 and was buried with her sisters in Wrington church. Among many other notable friends of the sisters who stayed at their house "Barley Wood," which is still standing, was Macaulay, who never forgot the beautiful Valley.

John Locke's association with Wrington was purely accidental, as his mother was only on a visit when he was born there in 1632. His father was, however, a Somersetshire man—a small landowner at Stanton Drew.

Wrington Church is a spacious building of great distinction, its tower being especially lovely. One of its vicars was William Leaves, the composer of the music to Lady Lindsay's ballad "Auld Robin Gray." Butcombe, a prettily situated village in a nook of the Wrington Vale, overlooks the Yeo Reservoir.

On the northern slopes of the range lie Backwell and Flax Bourton. The former has a fine situation on a ridge, and the spacious church contains a 15th century screen and a tomb with the effigy of a knight in armour, probably one of the

Rodneys. Flax Bourton has a small Perpendicular church with some striking survivals of Norman work. The neighbouring village of Barrow Gurney, charmingly situated on a hill overlooking the Bristol reservoirs, has a church whose south aisle once formed the chapel of a 12th century Benedictine nunnery. The site of the nunnery is now occupied by Barrow Court, a fine Elizabethan mansion.

Long Ashton, though now almost absorbed by Bristol, retains a breath of the original countryside in the glades of Ashton Park, which was first planted and enclosed in 1392, and screens the mansion from the road. Designed by Inigo Jones, the house incorporates a few features of the earlier building on the site. The church is notable for a fine screen repainted in its original colours, and a 15th century tomb with the effigies of Sir Richard Choke, a Judge of Common Pleas, and his wife, who at one time resided at the Court. Collinson, the 18th century historian, who was vicar of Long Ashton, is also buried there.

One of the most interesting excursions into Somerset from Bristol is to the famous stone circles of Stanton Drew, which lie within easy reach of Pensford station, and can also be reached by a road running right across the top of great Dundry Hill, which is crowned by a village lying nearly 800 ft. above sea level. The church was built by the Merchant Venturers in the reign of Edward VI, and its tower is a conspicuous landmark for miles around. The hill commands a magnificent view northward of Bristol and the shining Avon, the Channel and the Monmouthshire hills, and southward across a valley of woods and pasture-lands to the Mendips.

A less arduous route runs through Whitchurch, a village at the foot of Knowle Hill with a church characteristic of the early Somersetshire style.

Stanton Drew is midway between Pensford and Chew Magna, and may be visited from either village. Though popularly known as Druidical remains, the stone circles of Stanton Drew are probably not older than the early Bronze Age. There is the usual local legend that they

represent dancers turned to stone for dancing on a Sunday. Another and less usual legend refers to a peculiar block of stone half buried under a hedge by the Pensford road. Known as Hautville's Coit, it is said that in the days of Henry III, Sir John Hautville, a local squire, threw it from the summit of the neighbouring Maes Knoll to its present resting place. Not content with this feat of strength, he followed it up by carrying three men at once to the top of Norton Hautville Church!

The remains at Stanton Drew consist of one great circle with an avenue, and two smaller circles; a triangle of stones known as the Cove; Hautville's Coit; and on the southern side of the river, two other stones. The church of Stanton Drew is a plain 14th century building outshone by a fine 15th century rectory displaying the arms of Bishop Beckington. Within a short distance, but hidden in trees, are Norton Malreward, which Chatterton alleged to be the birthplace of his supposititious monk Rowley, and Norton Hautville, home of the famous Sir John, who seems to have been a terror to the people of this countryside, who termed him a giant and related many stories of his strength in addition to his pitching of the Coit.

The valley of the Chew has many interesting and charming villages. Compton Dando, which has a 14th century church restored in the 18th century, lies southward of Keynsham and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Pensford, a picturesque village beside the river. Pensford commands lovely views of the valley, in the background of which is the graceful tower of Publow church. Publow once belonged to the St. Loes of Newton, some of whom are said to be buried in Chew Magna church.

Chew Magna, which lies a mile from the great stone circles of Stanton Drew, stands on a little island formed by the windings of the Chew River, and the Winford water. A place which has had greater importance in the past, it is now serenely lovely with more than one notable old house, and a glorious mediæval church. The 15th century effigies of Sir John St. Loe and his wife show the Knight as more

than 7 ft. tall, which is said to have been his actual height. The church also contains an Elizabethan tomb to the Babers. The mediæval church house still stands beside the entrance to the churchyard. Within a short distance of Chew Magna is Sutton Court, the home of the St. Loe family and their descendants for many generations, until it was bought by Elizabeth Baber for her stepson, John Strachey, in whose family it still remains. The beautiful old house is splendidly preserved, and was often visited by John Locke. Another fine old manor-house at Chew Magna, built in 1656, marks the site of a still earlier mansion. There is an interesting old Rectory at Chew Stoke, a mile away, which bears the date 1529. Curiously named Nempnett Thrubwell stands on high ground above the valley which commands views of the Mendips, Blagdon Reservoir and Wrington Valley.

There is a choice of roads between Bristol and Bath, but the " all Somerset route " runs through the charming valley of the Avon and follows the windings of the river fairly closely. At Brislington the road leaves the confines of Bristol for the quiet countryside. There are two quaint little figures on the tower of Brislington Church which are supposed to represent the founders, Lord and Lady de la Warr. A chapel to St. Anne once stood amongst the woods which border the river, and there was a ferry to bring pilgrims to the shrine, which was founded at the end of the 13th century, and was a notable place even two hundred years later, when Henry VII visited it from Bristol, though now all but the tradition of the site has vanished. Brislington Hill House is a 17th century brick mansion.

Keynsham, the chief town between Bristol and Bath, takes its name from St. Keyne, who lived there in a wood, and finding the serpents would not be converted, prayed they might be turned to stone. The innumerable ammonites in the neighbourhood are looked upon as a proof that her prayer was answered. It was at Keynsham, too, that Prince Bladud kept his swine when banished from his father's court. An Abbey was founded there in 1170 in which the

he Manor
ouse,
new
agna.

County
Bridge,
Keynsham

Stone Circle,
Stanton Drew.

founder, William, Earl of Gloucester, and Jasper Tudor, the uncle of Henry VII, were buried, but at the Dissolution it was granted to the Bridges family who left nothing but a few stones. The long straggling town is dominated by the massive tower of the church, which was built in 1634 to replace one destroyed by lightning. It contains monuments to the Bridges family, one of whom married the notorious Countess of Shrewsbury, who, dressed as a page, held the horse of the Duke of Buckingham whilst he fought a duel with her husband. A Roman tessellated pavement was discovered when the railway-cutting was made, and removed to Bristol. There is also a Roman road across the river. Keynsham is set on the River Chew at its confluence with the Avon. A couple of miles westward is Queen Charlton, originally the property of Queen Edith, wife of the Confessor, and later of Queen Catherine Parr. It was visited by Queen Elizabeth, who granted it a fair. The church is an exceedingly pretty building of the plain Norman type. There is a fine avenue of poplars in the neighbourhood—a most unusual feature in the countryside of Somerset. The manor-house beside the church is of great interest and antiquity.

Saltford, within a few miles of Bath, is a favourite boating resort, and the scene of annual regattas of Bristol watermen. The church was restored in 1851, but retains its Norman font which has roughly carved heads below the bowl. The old manor-house belongs to the Rodney family.

BATH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

CHAPTER X.

Bath is for so many people the gateway to Somerset that it is singularly fortunate it should be in such complete harmony with the spirit of the county. There is beauty and serenity in Bath, and a variety of interests against a background of history and tradition. There is the Bath of the Britons, that half-legendary town founded by Bladud, father of Shakespeare's King Lear; Bath of the Romans, who left a legacy of the finest Roman remains to be found in Europe outside Italy; Bath of the Georgians, with its brilliant social and literary associations and its care-free gaiety; the Bath of Jane Austen with its quiet, deliciously sly humour; the Bath of Dickens and Mr. Pickwick, with its robust jollity and good cheer, and a hundred other equally engrossing phases of life and history.

This amazing town has more associations with famous men and women of the past than any other place in the British

Isles with the single exception of London, and there is scarcely a house which has not at some time or another sheltered one or more celebrated people. Indeed, the story is told of a Bath resident who thought she ought to go on a motor-coach tour of the city—and the first place she was taken to was her own home " because someone famous had lived there " ! Bath's literary associations include such great names as Drayton, Spenser, Pepys, Dryden, Goldsmith, Smollett, Johnson, and Sheridan.

Bath is in many ways unique in the history of the world. It might claim, without much fear of dispute, to have the oldest curative establishment in existence, for in actual records the baths date back to A.D. 54, and if tradition is taken into account the springs were used as early as 863 B.C. It is the only city in the world's history which has been completely re-built in a quarter of a century after 1,800 years of existence, at the expense of one man, and that man a private citizen ; and it is the only existing specimen of an 18th century city in its entirety.

Time and again it has seemed as though the glories of Bath had vanished for ever, and yet it has again risen to be the centre of fashion and healing, and in modern times is enjoying a popularity that is greater than ever. The story of Bath is the story of England in the successive periods of Britons, Romans, Saxons, Normans and English, and it is a proof of its enduring vitality that to-day the Baths Establishment is more extensive than ever, and the record of its cures is yearly increasing.

Roman Bath took its name of Aquæ Sulis from the fact that the Romans found there a temple to a British Goddess called Sul, to whom they built a temple in the north west corner of the Baths, identifying her with Minerva. The Roman town was a compatatively small place covering about 23 acres, and was purely a health and pleasure resort. It consisted of the houses occupied by the officials and attendants at the Baths, and the villas of those who came there in search of health ; the Thermæ ; and the Temple of

Sul Minerva. Traces of a wall have been found which probably encircled the town, and beyond lay the great villas of wealthy nobles, and the cemetery on the Fosse Way in the level space between Lansdown and the Avon.

The Roman remains lie 20 feet below the modern street level, and are reached by a flight of stairs from the Pump Room of the present day. Evidence of Roman work was first found at Bath in 1755, when the foundations of a mansion for the Duke of Kingston were laid. The Duke caused a plan to be prepared, but beyond this no interest was taken in the discoveries until about 50 years ago, when the greater part of the baths were uncovered. The latest excavations were made in 1923 and disclosed two large rectangular swimming pools. The paving consisted of blocks of masonry about 15 ins. thick, gauged and bevelled on all sides, similar to that in the streets of Pompeii, the stones being laid in a bed of puddled clay, and the surface covered with lead from the Roman lead mines in the Mendip Hills. These swimming pools are of particular interest, as they show that a century or two after the construction of the Thermæ the Romans found themselves in need of more hypocausts and fewer baths, for portions of a later floor with its supporting pilæ have been found in both swimming pools.

In the earlier Thermæ the hot rooms open on to a covered promenade round the Rectangular Bath known as the Great Bath—a magnificent example of the work of Roman engineers, lying open to the sky. This great swimming pool is seventy-three feet long by twenty-nine feet wide, and six feet deep, the bottom being paved with sheets of lead welded together, about 40 lbs. being used for each foot of the bath. The steaming hot springs which issue from the ground at nearly 120 deg. Fahrenheit are brought to the Bath along a culvert which is used for its original purpose after all these centuries, the water cooling to about 62 deg. in the Bath itself, which is now the home of innumerable exceptionally fat, glittering goldfish. A path worn deep by the feet of the bathers, and ending in a final foot-shaped indentation which marks the

The Roman Baths,
Bath.

Bath Abbey from River Avon.

diving stone from which they took the plunge, is a convincing testimony to the numbers who once bathed in the Great Bath. Nearby the remains of Roman lead pipes shew where fresh drinking water was brought to a special stone basin beside the bath, to quench the thirst of the bathers, and incidentally prove that we have merely recovered the art of fusing two edges of lead, for though the shapeliness of modern pipes is an advance, their efficiency is no greater. Beyond the Great Bath the lovely Circular Bath is to be found, lying in cool shadows.

Anyone who has been to a modern Turkish Bath can visualise the scene in the Thermæ in the days of its greatness. Even the present day "costume" is similar, and there is little doubt that the conversation in the hot-rooms and promenades was much the same. One despairing lover has left a record of his feelings on a piece of lead still to be seen: "May the person who has carried off (the heart of) Vilbia waste away like that dumb water . . . it may be Vinna, or Exsuperius, or Verianus, or Severianus, or Augustalis, or Comitianus, or Catusminianus, or Germanilla, or Iovina." So many "possibles" suggest the lady was a most accomplished flirt.

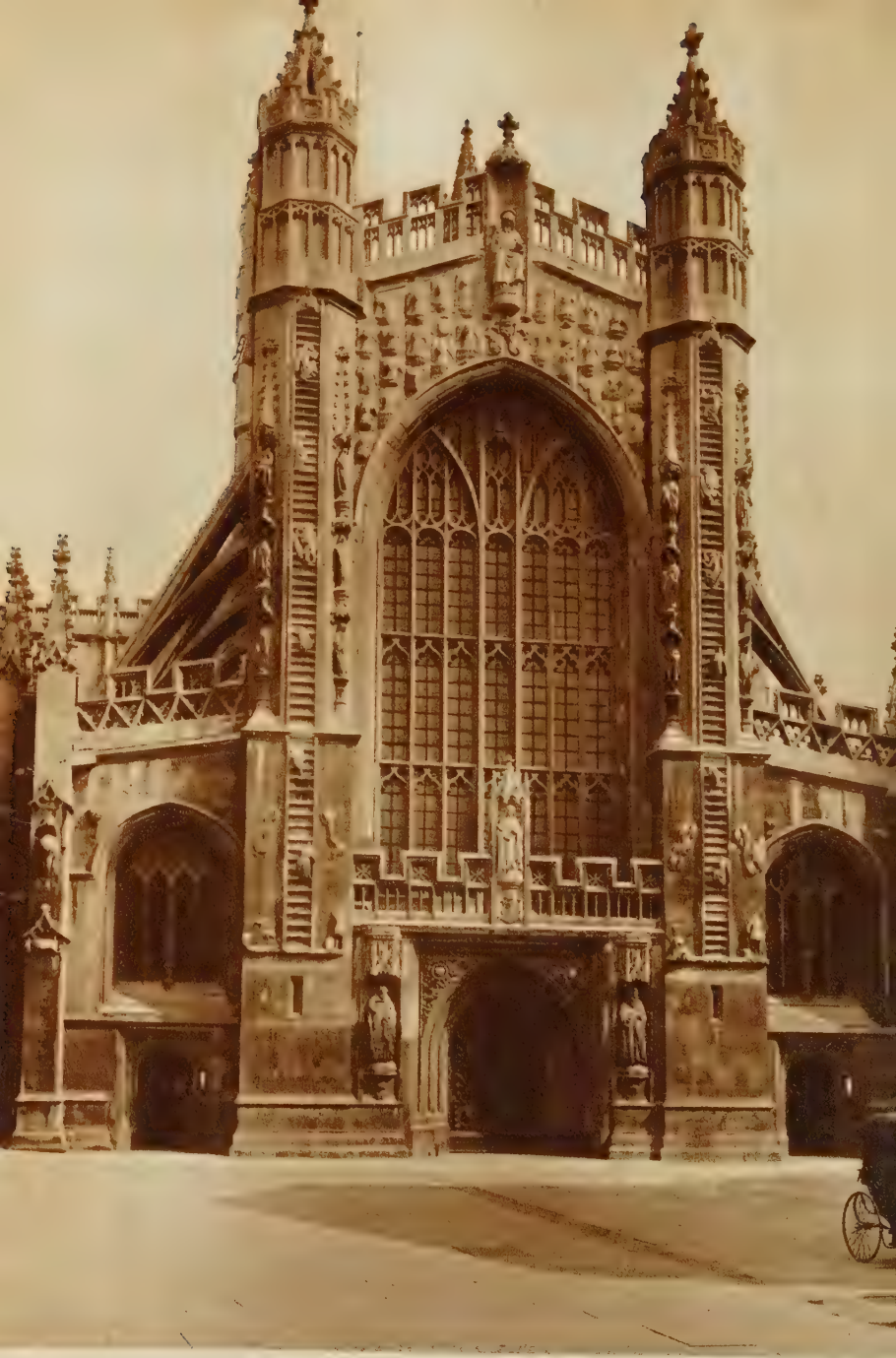
After the recall of the Romans the fate of Bath is shrouded in mystery for two centuries, and when it emerges once more the whole character of the city has changed. Instead of a bathing establishment, it is a religious centre. The first foundation was a nunnery, which lasted less than a century. After its destruction by the Danes it was replaced by a monastery, probably founded by King Offa, of which little is known. After the coronation of King Edgar there in A.D. 973 the Benedictines, who had degenerated into a college of secular canons, were re-established and for the first time were governed by an abbot. According to the Golden Legend, St. Elphege came to Bath about 980 and built an Abbey, although it is doubtful if he was ever abbot. At the time of the Norman Conquest the affairs of the monastery had again become complicated, so much so that two abbots

were ruling at the same time! Small wonder in the circumstances that the Abbey became involved in conspiracies which gave William Rufus an excuse to seize it and confer it on John de Villula, Bishop of Wells. That able pontiff made Bath the seat of his Bishopric and laid the foundation of its prosperity. He was a learned and successful man, beloved by the scholars whom he attracted to Bath. The existing Abbey becoming too small for the ever-growing community, Villula devoted all his revenues to rebuilding the Saxon Church. Little now remains of his great work, the nave of which was so large that it would have contained all the present church. As it stands to-day, the Abbey is almost entirely the work of Bishop Oliver King, and commemorates in a curious feature a dream which inspired him to undertake the work. He saw a "vision of the Holy Trynitie with angels ascending and descending by a ladder neer to the foote of which there was a fayre olive tree supporting a crowne, and a voyce that said 'Let an Olive establish the Crowne and let a King restore the Church.'" The Bishop immediately began the present church, causing a representation of his dream to be carved on the west front. Not unnaturally, there was some difficulty in indicating which of the angels were ascending and which descending, which was finally overcome by making them descend head first! There is an exceptional number of wall monuments in the Abbey, some of which have very quaint inscriptions, but the only two of importance are those to Quin the actor, and Beau Nash, the eighteenth-century "King" of Bath. The vaulting of the choir is of enchanting loveliness, and ranks among the finest in Great Britain. The Abbey was the last complete ecclesiastical building erected before the dissolution of the monasteries. It dates from 1499 and is in the Perpendicular style throughout. It is especially noted for its enormous area of glass, which gives it a brightly lighted interior seldom found in the larger mediæval churches.

Bath owes to John de Villula not only the foundations of its Abbey church, but the first reconstruction of the Baths

The Avon at Bath.

The Kin
Spring,
Bath.



Bath Abbey, West Front.

after the departure of the Romans. Villula was the King's physician before his appointment to the bishopric, and naturally took an interest in the healing properties of the springs which bubbled up near the Abbey he was building. Two accounts of the splendours of these baths are still in existence, both written within fifty years of their construction.

Although frequently visited by the English Kings and Queens during the Middle Ages, and enjoying successive waves of popularity, Bath gradually grew more and more ruinous until the eighteenth century, when Ralph Allen, the millionaire philanthropist, conceived the amazing idea of pulling down the whole of a city which had existed for centuries, and substituting for its mean streets and ramshackle houses the magnificent streets and crescents to be seen in Bath to-day. John Wood and his son were the chosen architects, and everything but the fine old abbey was swept away. The result more than justified this boldness, for under the skilled direction of the architects every advantage was taken of the lie of the land with its valleys, hills, downs and woods and a Garden City was created, in the most charming sense of that ill-used phrase, which is still unrivalled in Great Britain. The famous Pulteney Street and Laura Place, with the bridge across the River Avon which is the last one surviving in England with rows of shops on either side, were built a few years later than the rest of the town, to the designs of Baldwin, who carried out the original architectural style.

When the city was completed, the hour brought the man, and Beau Nash rose from obscurity to effect a similar reformation for the society of Bath, which speedily became again the most fashionable resort of Britain.

Although the King's Bath, which is still in use, remains exactly as it was in Stuart times, the rest of the baths establishment has been completely rebuilt within the last few years, and equipped with all the latest scientific inventions for the alleviation of suffering, for Bath consistently gives time, thought and money with ungrudging lavishness to

provide for the comfort and entertainment of its guests. Even if the beauty of the gracious old town, terraced on lovely hills beside the placid Avon, could not move the visitor there are still the allurements of innumerable phases of life in modern Bath, which range from the informal gaieties of bathing teas to the intellectual delights of classical concerts, the popular entertainments of the cinema and theatre, facilities for every kind of sport, and the attractions of innumerable beauty spots in the near neighbourhood.

Bath is an all-the-year round resort with one of the most spacious and finely-equipped baths establishments in Europe. The hot springs yield over half a million gallons of radium-impregnated water daily, and all forms of douches and treatments are available. The mineral waters are richer in radium emanation than any of the other Spas in this country, and are of service in both medical and surgical cases, and are of particular benefit to people suffering from rheumatoid arthritis, gout, paralysis, neuralgia, neuritis and skin affections. The mineral water is served for drinking in the historic eighteenth-century Pump Room, which is typical of the elegance of the period when Beau Nash reigned supreme, and during the summer season the waters are also served at the Colonnade Fountain in the Gardens beside the Avon—one of the many public gardens and parks which are not the least of the charms of this enchanting city.

Bath is a centre for many delightful excursions in Somerset and Wiltshire of which the chief is, of course, to her sister city of Wells, with which the majority of visitors also couple a visit to the Wookey Hole caves as a matter of course. Nearer the city there are charming rambles over Lansdown Hill, and southward to the villages and towns which lie among the rolling hills and green valleys sweeping away to the Mendips.

There are a number of villages on Lansdown Hill. North Stoke is reached through the popular Bath suburb of Weston, by a road which forms part of the Via Julia, which in Roman times linked the Spa with South Wales. The village of

The West Door, Bath Abbey.

Prior Park,
Bath.

North Stoke, hidden away on the edge of Lansdown where it drops to the Avon valley, commands a lovely panorama from "Prospect Stile," embracing Bath, Bristol, the valleys of the Severn and Avon, the long line of the Mendips, and the Welsh Hills. The church, though not particularly beautiful, is interesting. Within a short distance of North Stoke is the monument to Sir Bevil Grenville, the Royalist leader who was killed at the Battle of Lansdown in 1643. It is said that when he fell, his Cornish servant caught his master's horse and set Sir Bevil's sixteen-year-old son on its back and led him to the head of the Cornishmen. The charge which followed completely routed the Parliamentarians. The whole incident was completely in keeping with the family's traditions of loyalty and valour. The village of Langridge, with its lonely and almost wholly Norman church, is perched on a steep ridge of the hill near a beautiful manor-house dating from the 14th and 16th century. On the summit of Lansdown hill is the tower built by William Beckford, the author of "Vathek." The tower and its grounds were given to Bath by his daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton, and were converted into a cemetery in which Beckford was buried.

Set in the hollow between Lansdown Hill and the Gloucester road is Swainswick, which is chiefly celebrated as the birthplace of William Prynne, the Puritan pamphleteer who was born in the manor-house in 1600. Educated at Bath, he became Recorder and M.P. for the City, but soon became known as a seditious libeller, and after vilifying the Royalists, turned on his Puritan friends, who imprisoned him in Dunster Castle. The ancient church of Swainswick contains monuments to Prynne's parents. The village is sheltered by Solsbury Hill, which is crowned with some earthworks, and faces Charlcombe, which clings to the side of Lansdown. The tiny church of Charlcombe contains a monument to Sarah Fielding, the sister of the novelist, who was herself the author of "David Simple." On the south-east slopes of Solsbury Hill is Batheaston, overlooking the valley watered by St. Catherine's brook, which furnished

Gainsborough with some subjects for his brush. The village is chiefly notable for Batheaston Villa, which was the scene of ridiculous contests of "poets" which were ridiculed by Walpole in the 18th century. St. Catherine, a manor of the Priory of Bath, boasts a 15th century grange with terraced gardens, and an interesting church.

The two chief routes between Bath and its sister city of Wells are the old Fosse Way through Radstock, which has roads branching off to South Stoke, Englishcombe, Combe Hay, and Wellow, or the main road through Corston, which passes near Twerton, and Newton St. Loe. Both routes cross the line of the great Wansdyke.

South Stoke is an interesting little village with a church boasting a Norman doorway of beautiful design, and a Perpendicular tower. Nearby is a great gabled mediæval barn which serves as a pigeon-cote and tithe barn—an unusual combination. Englishcombe stands above two valleys north of the Wansdyke. It has a Norman church and a fine tithe barn. Combe Hay, a tiny village half-hidden in trees, has a fine church in which is buried Sir Lewis Dyves, who held Sherborne Castle for the King during the Civil War. A circuitous path leads from Combe Hay to Wellow, whose church well repays a visit. It is one of the few churches where the date is actually recorded, having been built in 1372. A gabled 16th century farmhouse in the village was once the manor of the great Hungerford family, and the well of St. Julian near the church is said to have been haunted by the family ghost when disaster threatened the family. The foundations of a Roman villa were discovered half a mile westward in 1685, the site being marked by four upright stones, and a mile away is the fine Celtic tumulus of Stoney Littleton.

Twerton, on the main road to Wells, although now a modern suburb of Bath, has memories which date back at least to Norman times, as the fine doorway of its restored church proves. It was famous in the 14th century for the cloth-weaving industry established there by monks, and

was probably the place from which Chaucer's "Wife of Bath" came. It was here that Fielding settled for a short while after his marriage, and commenced "Tom Jones."

Corston is a pretty, old-world village where Southey went to school for an unhappy year, though his poem "The Retrospect" describes it with apparent affection. Once a manor-house, and now a farm, in Southey's time it was run by an inefficient schoolmaster and his drunken wife, who must have been a severe trial to Southey's spirit after the affectionate care of his aunt in Bath.

Newton St. Loe is an exceptionally pretty village, well hidden from the highway. Judging by the Roman remains discovered in the village and its immediate neighbourhood, it must have been a favourite haunt of the Romans. It came into the hands of the St. Loe family in the reign of Henry III. They were a powerful and spirited race of warriors, one of whom had the hardihood to keep King John under lock and key until he had abated some unjust demands he had made. The ancient castle has disappeared with the exception of a gateway and a battlemented tower standing in the grounds of an 18th century mansion. Soon after leaving Corston the road passes Stantonbury Hill, which is crowned by a large encampment on the line of the Wansdyke, which can be traced distinctly at this point. The origin of this curious earthwork has not yet been satisfactorily proved, but its intermittent appearances have enabled the line to be reconstructed from Maes Knoll on Dundry, across Combe Down into Wiltshire.

A choice of several routes between Bath and Frome enables the tourist to see some of the delightful places near the Wiltshire border. Leaving Bath by way of Bathwick Hill and the curious sham castle which Ralph Allen built to "improve" the view from his town house in the North Parade, Claverton Down is reached, which alone has sufficient interests to keep the tourist happily employed for at least a day. There are distinct traces of the Wansdyke, and memories of the skirmish of Claverton which preceded

the battle of Lansdown, and innumerable associations with Ralph Allen.

Part of Ralph Allen's immense fortune was derived from the quarries of Bath stone on Combe Down, and in 1736 he commissioned the elder Wood to build him a great classical mansion to show the beauties of the stone. A story reminiscent of the Arabian Nights, and probably as fabulous, is told that Wood, doubting if even Ralph Allen could pay for so princely a building, was shown chest after chest full of gold to reassure him !

Prior Park is generally considered Wood's culminating work. Set in a magnificent situation, with beautifully planned grounds, it is an extraordinarily imposing building. Such defects in its construction as there are owe their origin to the alterations of the architect's original plans insisted upon by Allen, with a view to making it more effective as an advertisement for his excellent stone. And so it is, and not merely in the sense he intended. About ninety years ago the whole of the interior was burnt out, leaving the walls standing—an eloquent testimony to the fire-resisting properties of Bath stone. The mansion now houses a successful Roman Catholic school. The terrace commands a typical 18th century " vista " of sweeping lawns bowered in trees, terminating in a beautiful little Palladian bridge. Many are the great people who have paced that terrace as the guests of Ralph Allen, and left on record their appreciation, the most charming compliment of all coming from Fielding, who took his host as the model for " Squire Allworthy."

The gardens and meadows of Prior Park slope down to the village of Widcombe, in whose parish its stands. There is a fine old church, and Widcombe Lodge has an interest from its associations with Fielding, who finished " Tom Jones " there.

Ralph Allen was buried in Claverton church, and the tomb of his close friend, Ralph Graves, is nearby. Graves was a remarkable man who was Vicar of Claverton for

The Botanical Gardens,
Bath.

The Famous George Inn, Norton St. Philip.

54 years, and during his long life acquired the manorial rights of the delightful little village of Monckton Combe, which lies two miles away.

A little beyond Monckton Combe is Midford Castle, a curious triangular building, said to have been built by a gambler who won a fortune by turning up the ace of clubs, and intended the shape of the castle to commemorate his luck. Within a mile or two of Midford is the charming village of Freshford, which stands near the confluence of the Frome and the Avon, and is the key to three fascinating villages—Farleigh Hungerford, Norton St. Philip, and Hinton Charterhouse.

Farleigh Hungerford is a fair and lovely village on the Wiltshire border, whose history is bound up with the great ruined castle, which was built at the same period, and on the same plan as Nunney, but on a far larger scale. According to Leyland, Sir Walter Hungerford acquired the earlier manor-house of the Montfords which stood on the site, and spent the ransom he had obtained by the capture of the Duke of Orleans at Agincourt in transforming the house into the castle as it stands to-day.

Although the only time it was besieged was during the Civil War, the story of its owners was one of almost continuous ill-fortune. The majority of the Hungerfords were beheaded, frequently through no fault but that of espousing a losing, if righteous, cause. During the reign of Henry VIII, Sir Walter Hungerford kept his third wife closely imprisoned in one of the towers of the castle, giving her no money and very little food for four years, during which time he was suspected of attempts to have her poisoned. He was executed on a charge of treason in 1540 and his widow subsequently married again. The castle was finally sold out of the family in 1686 by Sir Edward Hungerford, who was ruined by his own reckless extravagance. The remains consist of the gate-house, parts of the enclosing walls, the remains of two towers, and the chapel which is now a museum rather than a church, but contains some gorgeous tombs to the Hungerfords.

The pride of Norton St. Philip is justly centred in its glorious old inn, The George, which is claimed to be the oldest licensed house in England. Dating from the 15th century, it is an entirely fascinating place of quaint nooks and tortuous passages, and rooms with low ceilings and leaded window panes. The Duke of Monmouth, who stayed at the inn the night before the skirmish in which the rebels had their only success of the ill-fated campaign, was shot at whilst standing at one of the windows. The church has many eccentricities of design, and contains an ancient effigy, and a modern tablet commemorating a long-vanished stone which Collinson saw during a visit in the 18th century and which perpetuated the memory of the " Fair Maidens of Foscot " who were Siamese Twins.

Hinton Priory was one of the only two Carthusian monasteries in Somerset. Originally founded by William Longspée, the son of Henry II and Fair Rosamund, at Hatherop in Gloucestershire, it was refounded at Hinton by his widow in 1232, on the same day that she founded a nunnery at Lacock, which lies just over the Wiltshire border. Hinton Charterhouse is now an exquisite fragment consisting of an Early English chapel, a pigeon-cote, the refectory, and some outbuildings, all shaded by giant trees. In the church of the charming little village of Hinton Charterhouse is the tomb of Anthony Hungerford, who died in 1594.

Remains of Monastery,
Hinton Charterhouse.

A Somerset Landscape, near Ilminster.

· SOUTH-EAST SOMERSET ·

CHAPTER XI.

The south-east borderland of Somerset is a countryside of low, grassy hills which have an extraordinary charm of colouring and atmosphere, particularly in the neighbourhood of Castle Cary, where every hill-top commands a glorious view of lush green pasture-lands reaching away to the foot of Glastonbury Tor and merging imperceptibly into an atmosphere of changing shades of blue, which is infinitely lovely. Little wonder this countryside has a quiet beauty breathing a serenity all too rare in this age of hurry and bustle, for it is the very heart of King Arthur's Country. At Cadbury Camp is the reputed site of Camelot, looking northward to the ever holy and beloved Glastonbury which was the inspiration of those who sought the Grail, and the final resting place of their King and leader, the hero Arthur.

Although at first sight the towns of south-east Somerset seem so scattered over the countryside that no definite plan of "sight-seeing" can be made, a closer study reveals that two main routes from Castle Cary, one running close to the county boundary, and the other across the north of the district, roughly speaking, link all the principal towns and enable every place of interest to be reached with ease.

The only towns not directly on these routes are Bruton and Wincanton, which are so situated that the roads linking them with Castle Cary and each other form a triangle which encloses an enchantingly lovely stretch of country.

BRUTON.

Bruton, the first of the towns of the south-east corner of Somerset, strikes the keynote of the antiquity of the settlements in this district. It lies about 11 miles from Frome in a little dell beside the River Brue, and is a delightful little town bearing in almost every nook and cranny of its quaint old streets the proof of its ancient origin. Though no building dates back before the Norman Conquest, the town has that indefinable atmosphere of antiquity which leaves little room for surprise that it was a place of importance in the days of Canute, when it had a mint, and a church said to have been founded by St. Aldhelm. In the 12th century Bruton became the property of William de Mohun of Dunster Castle, who founded a Priory of Austin Canons in 1147 on the site of an earlier monastery. This priory was raised to the dignity of an Abbey in 1511, only to become the property of the King's Standard Bearer, Sir Maurice Berkeley, at the Dissolution a few years later. The present church, which was the minster of the abbey ; the abbey court house which is now the vicarage, and a pigeon-cote, which is so unusually fine that it has been acquired by the National Trust, are all that now remains of the Abbey. Even the "fair and noble habitation" of the Berkeleys in which Charles I was entertained for two nights in 1644, has completely disappeared, but for the rest, Bruton is filled with ancient and lovely things which seem to lend their gracious dignity even to the modern houses. There is a delightful one-arched pack-horse bridge with a footway only $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. in width, from which views reminiscent of the fascinating waterways of Bruges are obtainable.

Bruton church is a noble Perpendicular building with a stately main tower and an unusual and attractive feature in the

Spanish Armada Bullion Chest,
Sexey's Hospital, Bruton.

The Pigeon-cote,
Bruton Abbey.

additional low tower elaborated from a chamber above the north porch. The chancel was unfortunately rebuilt in 1743 and though handsome in itself, appears incongruous in its contrast with the lovely 16th century nave and aisles. The church contains several fine monuments.

Everywhere in Bruton there are buildings to charm the eye, and arrest the interest. The origin of the beautiful Sexey's Hospital is itself a romance, for the founder was a poor boy of Bruton who rose to be auditor to Queen Elizabeth and James I. So generous was the endowment he made that the funds also support a large trade school established in 1889. The Grammar School founded in 1520 was suppressed at the Dissolution, but was revived by Edward VI, and is a delightfully picturesque group of buildings, with modern extensions to harmonise with older parts.

Within a mile of Bruton is Wyke Champflower, which has a 17th century chapel and a fine manor-house shaded with giant elms. Batcombe lies three miles north of Bruton, and is a pleasant village with a strikingly fine church tower. Richard Bernard, who died at Batcombe in 1691, was a Puritan divine from whose work, " The Isle of Man or Legal Proceedings in Man's Heart against Sin," Bunyan is said to have taken the plan of " Pilgrim's Progress."

WINCANTON.

Wincanton is a town with a pleasantly old-world atmosphere which is a veritable sun-trap set on the hillside above the Vale of Blackmoor. It was known to the Romans and Saxons, and became the property of Walter de Douay at the Conquest, but it appears to have had an uneventful history until the middle of the 16th century, when it was so devastated by the plague that travellers went miles out of their way to avoid infection. The town formed the base of the Parliamentarian troops engaged in the siege of Sherborne Castle, and some 50 years later saw a skirmish between the troops of William of Orange and some royalist Irish soldiers under the famous commander, Sarsfield. An old

house with a dog's head over the door has a room still called the Orange Room which is said to have sheltered William of Orange for a night or two on his way to London. The town also suffered from a great fire in 1747, and during the Napoleonic wars was a depot for French prisoners. Wincanton's most famous son, Lord Chief Justice Dyer, was born at Roundhill, two miles to the north of the town. He was a man of such strict integrity that he retained his post under both Mary and Elizabeth. The original settlers in Rhode Island, America, came chiefly from Wincanton.

Marsh Court, three miles south of Wincanton, is a manor-house dating from 1661 which is now a farm. It stands at the head of the Blackmoor Vale, which stretches away towards Bournemouth. It was in this vale that Hardy's heroine, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, worked on a farm.

Wincanton is a great sporting centre, and is one of the few places in Somerset with a steeplechase course. This is a popular resort on Easter Monday and during October.

The town is the key to an exceptionally beautiful and interesting district.

The church at Cucklington, which lies three miles away, embodies varying periods of architecture from Norman to Perpendicular. At Templecombe there are the remains of the only Somersetshire preceptory of the Knights Templars. It was founded in the 12th century, and a long building which was probably the refectory, is now used as the barn of Manor Farm. The ruins of a small chapel stand in the orchard. Scarcely a mile south is Horsington, which has one of the most remarkable crosses in Somerset. Four circular steps with a socket of massive dimensions are surmounted by a large tapering octagonal monolith, which is ornamented with a rare and curious sculpture generally agreed to be of 13th century workmanship. It is in a fine state of preservation.

Milborne Port, which lies directly on the Dorset border, was in ancient times a borough, though it is now only a small village. The church is an impressive building retaining much Norman work, and the ancient Guildhall also has a

Norman doorway. At the east end of the village is Venn, a Queen Anne mansion which is the seat of the Medlicotts. The village is a mile and a half south of the great earthwork of Milborne Camp.

Henstridge, four or five miles away, has a church which is chiefly notable for a 15th century altar tomb. The Virginia Inn at the cross-roads was once a famous coaching house. It is said to be the place where Sir Walter Raleigh's servant emptied a stoup of beer over his master, who was smoking, in the belief that he was on fire. The same claim is made for a seat in Sherborne Castle grounds.

Stavordale Priory and Penselwood are also within easy reach of Wincanton. Stavordale Priory was founded in 1263 and rebuilt in its present form in 1442. The church remains intact, although it has been converted into a private dwelling house. It is almost the only church in Somerset originally attached to a religious house which has survived in so complete a form. It has a fine timber roof and a charming little chapel. Penselwood is surrounded by hills crowned with ancient encampments. There are nearly 700 curious circular pits in the neighbouring fields, which have given antiquarians much food for thought. Penselwood is believed to have seen a great deal of fighting in the time of the Danish invasion.

Wincanton is one of the stations for the lovely estate of Stourhead, which is a famous show place of Wiltshire. It lies about seven miles from the town.

Nothing in all Somerset is lovelier than the road between Wincanton and Castle Cary, with its wide views across the Cadbury Country to Glastonbury Tor and the hill ranges of Somerset.

CASTLE CARY.

Castle Cary is more suggestive of antiquity than rich in actual relics, for it has been singularly unfortunate not only in the disappearance of its castle, but also in the almost entire absence of historical documents until the late Middle Ages. The manor was given by William the Conqueror

to William de Douay, but within a hundred years it had come into the possession of the Lovels, who probably built the castle. The exact date of its foundation is unknown, but in 1138 it was held for the Empress Maud, and sustained a bitter siege which only ended when the garrison surrendered to Stephen to save themselves from starvation. Fifteen years later it was held by Henry de Tracy for Stephen and was again captured. It was probably destroyed soon after, and was succeeded in 1207 by a manor-house which has also disappeared. Excavations carried out at the end of last century disclosed the foundations of the Castle and blocks of masonry now mark the angles of the great keep.

Cromwell and Fairfax spent some days in and around Cary in 1645, during which visit many ornaments in the church were defaced, whilst accounts show the bells had to be recast and the roof re-leaded after the Parliamentarian troops had left. Charles II also spent a night in the town disguised as a servant, on his flight from Worcester.

There is no record of the foundation of the parish church, but the present building is believed to date from the time of Henry VI, though it has been much restored. The registers date from 1564. There are two old cottages in Cary dated 1623, and the George Inn is of considerable age, but the most fascinating relic the town possesses is its quaint and unusual Round House, which was at one time the town lock-up. It consists of a single cell 7 ft. wide and 10 ft. high, and was built in 1779 at the modest cost of £23—money which was diverted from benefactions left at the beginning of the 17th century to be spent on gifts to " the poor of the parish for ever." One wonders what the poor of the parish thought of this particular gift ?

One curious feature of the town is the very high pavements or " batches " at either end of the long and pleasant main street. In places this footpath is raised 5 or 6 ft. above the level of the road, and it is said to mark ancient trackways, dating back to Saxon times, where the sandy earth has been worn down by constant use during the centuries.

Castle Cary is sheltered by grass-clad Lodge Hill, which is crowned with the remains of an earthwork. Although the hill only rises two hundred feet above the town, and is but 500 ft. above sea level, it commands a magnificent panorama of range after range of hills, dominated by Glastonbury Tor. It is said that the towers and spires of thirty churches can be picked out from this viewpoint.

South of Castle Cary is the Cadbury and Camel Country, and westward is Caryland, which has been called by that name since the 13th century. It is watered by the little Cary river which gives its name to Babcary, with its Norman church and ancient burial ground beside the Fosse Way; the little hamlets of Cary Fitzpane and Cook's Cary, and to Lyte's Cary, the ancient home of the Somerset family of Lyte, who have been settled there since the 13th century. The lovely manor-house dates chiefly from the 15th century though the chapel is of 14th century work.

The Cadbury Country is rich not only in beauty of contour and colouring, but in those fragrant legends which have become more enthralling and real to the imaginative Englishman than any history, for on the dark height above South Cadbury is Cadbury Castle, which has for untold ages been the traditional site of Camelot. Here, too, is the great Causeway, which originally ran the whole way to Glastonbury and has been known to the country people time out of mind as "Arthur's Causeway." It is said that on Christmas Eve the hero king and his knights ride by on silver shod horses to the spring at Sutton Montis. The earthworks of Cadbury Castle are unusually large and strong. There are four ramparts and ditches, the inner one of which is faced with masonry, enclosing about eighteen acres in which there are two springs.

A couple of miles northward is the village of North Cadbury with its 15th century church containing some fine tombs, and its Elizabethan mansion of Cadbury Court.

The highroad between North Cadbury and Yeovil runs through the heart of the Camel Country, which takes its name from the little river Cam. Here is the charming village

of Queen Camel, which has a stately mediæval church with an incongruous 18th century " classical " porch. A mineral spring in the neighbourhood is claimed to have the same properties as the Harrogate waters. West Camel Church has a Norman font and several interesting features, a richly sculptured fragment of a 9th century cross measuring 2 ft. 8 ins. in length by 1 ft. 2 ins. in width, which had been built into the wall, was discovered during the restoration of 1866.

Marston Magna, where Walter Raymond lived as a boy and received his education, lies two miles to the south of West Camel. It has a church with several unusual features in which much Norman and Early English work is predominant. There is a Jacobean house close to the church, and a moated enclosure which is said to be the site of a mansion of the Beauchamp family.

YEOVIL.

Yeovil has that air of leisured content which is the prerogative of a town which, through centuries of existence, has maintained and increased its prosperity without losing its quiet individuality. Yeovil was the birthplace of the late Walter Raymond, the novelist who wrote with such charm and understanding of Somerset and its people.

There is a splendid collection of Romano-British relics in the Wyndham museum which points to the town's early origin. It is mentioned in Domesday book, and there are documents still in existence referring to the town during the Norman era. Yeovil's mediæval history is interesting. Its first charter was granted by King John in 1205. Bishop Ralph of Bath and Wells was besieged in the Parish Church by infuriated townsmen in 1349. A devastating fire in 1449 destroyed most of the links with Yeovil's earlier days, with the exception of the noble parish church, which is set on a slight eminence in the centre of the town. A building which could cause Professor Freeman to say " we have here as truly a work of genius as Cologne or Winchester," is undoubtedly worth inspection. Dating from about 1380, it is in a severe but beautiful style of architecture lightened by lofty arches

Cadbury Castle.

Abbey Farm
and Tithe Barn,
Preston Plucknett.

Parish Church,
Yeovil.

and exceptionally large windows and is one of the finest of the purely Perpendicular Parish Churches in England. There is a magnificent lectern which is a rare example of 15th century brasswork.

Three of the ancient coaching inns survive in the town : the Three Choughs, the Mermaid, and the George. The last named is a picturesque timbered building which is probably the oldest example of domestic architecture in Yeovil. The Castle Inn, now pulled down, was once the house of a chantry priest. Woborne's Almshouses date back to the 15th century, and just outside the town is Newton Surmaville House, a splendid Jacobean mansion set in the valley of the Yeo, practically unaltered since it was built.

Apart from its own very great charm, Yeovil has the supreme good fortune to be set in a neighbourhood which is rich in beauty and historic interest. A favourite ramble of Yeovil's citizens is to the charming woodlands of Nine Springs. Babylon Hill, which lies half a mile east of the town, not only commands a fine view of the countryside, but was also the scene of a skirmish between the Royalists and Parliamentarians in 1642.

There are innumerable ancient manor-houses near Yeovil—the house of John Stourton and tithe barn at Preston Plucknett, which probably dates from the reign of Richard II ; Brympton D'Evercy, with its stately manor-house blending Tudor and Stuart work ; and Montacute House, one of the most splendid and remarkable of all the glorious mansions of Somerset. Built between 1580 and 1601 to the plans of John Thorpe, the architect of Longleat, it is an extraordinarily imposing place which is now in the possession of the National Trust, and, in 1932, the Princess Royal formally handed the title deeds to Viscount Esher who represented the Trust, on behalf of the purchasers. The village of Montacute has a history far older than that of the great mansion, for it lies in the shelter of the hill on which a stone cross was discovered in the days of Canute as a result of the dream of the village smith. Tofig, the lord of the manor, had the cross placed on a

waggon drawn by twelve white cows and twelve red oxen, and recited the names of various English shrines. The oxen did not stir until he mentioned the name of Waltham, and the cross was accordingly conveyed there and a great Abbey raised to enshrine the holy relic. A chapel was also built on the hill top where the cross was found, but after the Conquest, Robert of Mortain, brother of Norman William, built a great stronghold on the site and made it the pivot of the feudal system in Somerset. Once the strongest fortress between the mouth of the Parrett and the estuary of the River Exe, it has completely vanished, and only a ring of earthworks now remains to mark the site. At the foot of the hill is the lovely 15th century gateway which is all that survives of a Cluniac priory founded in the reign of Henry I. The church successfully combines Norman, Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular work and contains some very rich monuments. The "Borough" is a picturesque square of old-world houses grouped round a fountain.

One of the chief excursions from Montacute is to Hambdon Hill, a Romano-British stronghold at the foot of which is Stoke-sub-Hambdon. There is a fascinating inn and a church with considerable Norman work.

Among the many interesting little villages near Yeovil are Barwick with its interesting church, and Odcombe, which was the birthplace of Tom Coryate, who should surely be the "patron saint" of all hikers. Born in 1577, he walked to such good purpose that he humorously dubbed himself the "Odcombe Legge Stretcher." On May 14th, 1608, he set out to explore Europe, and reached Venice, partly by walking and partly by getting lifts in coaches, but on his return journey he walked the whole way from Venice to Flushing—some 1,000 miles—in one pair of shoes, which he hung up in Odcombe church afterwards, as a thank-offering for his safe return. Though of a lively disposition, he was an extremely learned man and wrote a book on his experiences, which he gave the quaint title of "Crudities hastily gobbled up in 5 months' travel, Newly Digested in the hungry air of Odcombe." It was re-published as recently as 1905. Four

Brympton d'Evercey
Church and Cross.

Montacute House.

years after his return he set out again and walked to Jerusalem, whence he visited the court of the Great Mogul, but died at Surat on his way back. It was Coryate who first introduced forks into England, having seen them used in Italy.

CREWKERNE.

Crewkerne lies nine miles from Yeovil, cradled in green hills close to the Dorsetshire boundary. It is a pleasant and prosperous little town whose streets converge on a central market place. Its church is a 15th century building with a fine tower and a beautiful west front, decorated with some amusing gargoyles representing a village orchestra, and a niched carving which once represented St. George and the Dragon—but the Dragon presumably conquered in this fight, for St. George has completely disappeared. There is a unique chamber at one end of the south transept which was formerly thought to be the cell of an anchorite, but is now described in the church pamphlet as a shrine. Crewkerne was a possession of the Saxon Kings and had its own Mint. It took a part in the Civil War; saw the execution of ten men for complicity in the Monmouth Rebellion, and entertained William of Orange and his suite on their way to London. They attended a service at the church on Sunday, November 25th, 1688.

A 15th century house on the north side of the churchyard was originally a Grammar school, one of its pupils being Hardy, the friend of Lord Nelson. Wordsworth lived at Crewkerne for a time during 1795. One of the sources of the town's prosperity is sailmaking, and it has supplied the canvas for English yachts entered for the America Cup.

Within easy reach of Crewkerne is Hinton St. George. Its splendid mansion dates in part from the time of Henry VIII. It was the ancient seat of the Poulett family, who settled there in the the reign of Henry I, and whose magnificent tombs enrich Hinton church. It was one of the Pouletts who became the keeper of Mary Queen of Scots during her imprisonment, and who was extraordinarily bitter against the

Queen. There is a fine cross in the centre of the village and a delightful old house known as The Priory.

The neighbouring village of Merriott has a church with some fine gargoyles and other interesting features. Two miles further north, there is an Elizabethan manor-house at Wigborough, whilst a still finer specimen of the period lies near the Dorset border at Wayford. It was a seat of the Daubeney family and has the date 1602 on the drawing-room mantelpiece.

Eastward of Crewkerne is Haselbury Plucknett, where St. Wulfric died in 1154, after living for years in a cell near the church, clad in chain mail. He acquired an enormous reputation for sanctity and was visited by Henry I and Stephen, to the latter of whom he prophesied he would be king, answering his expressions of incredulity by saying, "It is thou, Stephen, that I mean, for the Lord hath delivered the realm into thy hand." He was buried in his cell, but his remains were later removed to a chapel in the Early English church, which is still known as Wulfric's aisle, though the building has since been greatly altered at the hands of restorers. East, West and Middle Chinnock are a singularly beautiful trio of villages. West Coker is a large village with a spacious church, but cannot compare in interest with East Coker, which lies a mile or two south-east. East Coker, is a picturesque village in which is grouped an ancient church, a 15th century mansion, and a row of 17th century almshouses. An ancient manor-house, now a farm, was the birthplace of Dampier, a 17th century navigator, whose adventures are more thrilling and varied than the wildest imaginings of modern novelists. He made voyages to Newfoundland, Jamaica, Yucatan, Sierra Leone, and Chili, and was marooned on Nichobar Island, from which he escaped by native canoe. He was wrecked on the desert island of Ascension, where he and his crew lived for two months on turtles and goats—and, finally, died quietly in his bed in London at the age of 63. His book of travel, "A Voyage Round the World," which was published about 1691, is still read as a notable contribution to travel literature.

Close to the Dorset border is Sutton Bingham, whose church, whilst retaining its original Norman chancel arch, is notable for its Early English chancel with some curious 13th or 14th century wall paintings. There is a very ancient sepulchral cross erected over a large tomb in the churchyard. The neighbouring church of Pendomer has a remarkably fine monument, believed to be that of Sir John de Dummer, who died about 1321.

The road from Crewkerne to Chard passes near Cricket St. Thomas, which is hidden among hills. The mansion, which dates from the beginning of last century, is set in glorious grounds and was formerly the seat of Lord Bridport. The little village has associations with three notable sailors —Alexander Hood, the first Viscount Bridport, who is buried in the church; Sir Amyas Preston, who was Lieutenant of the "Ark" in the action against the Spanish Armada, and who also helped to "singe the King of Spain's beard" at Cadiz; and the Rev. William Lord Nelson, brother of the famous Admiral.

CHARD.

Chard is the most southerly town in Somerset, and stands only a mile from the Devon border, on the slope of a range of hills dividing the valleys of the Axe and Yarty. Parts of the town lie nearly 500 ft. above sea level, and the unusually spacious High Street has the curious distinction of a stream coursing down each side, one of which flows northward to the Bristol Channel and the other southward to the English Channel.

Set right on the Fosse Way, Chard has had a long existence of quiet prosperity, confirmed to it by charters from three English sovereigns, and only broken during the Civil War and the Monmouth Rebellion.

Although Charles I's stay in Chard, so disastrous to his cause, had no ill consequences to the town, two men and a woman were hanged as a result of the subsequent local

Royalist rising under Colonel Penruddocke, who was himself beheaded at Exeter. Monmouth's visit to the town was followed by the hanging of twelve of his local supporters, and the execution, by order of Judge Jeffreys, of two local squires, who had the misfortune to come in contact with Monmouth's army, in spite of the fact that they had refused to join the rebels who had consequently despoiled their property !

Chard is a gracious old town with some singularly lovely houses surviving to confirm the general atmosphere of dignity and charm. The church dates from the early 15th century, and has a particularly fine series of gargoyles and a beautiful monument showing the effigies of William Brewer, who died in 1618, and his wife, with their six sons and five daughters. Buried in the churchyard is Stringfellow, who invented the forerunner of the modern aeroplane—the first "heavier than air" machine which ever flew. Stringfellow built the machine which was propelled by steam, in a house in Chard High Street, which has been marked by the Royal Air Force with a plaque in his honour. The Grammar School was founded in 1671 and the Waterloo House and its neighbour are two magnificent specimens of 16th century architecture. Chough's Inn is yet another of Chard's ancient and wholly delightful houses. Chard also takes pride in the fact that it was the birthplace of Margaret Bonfield, the first woman Labour M.P.

Among the many places of interest in the neighbourhood of Chard are Leigh House, a beautiful Elizabethan mansion ; Winsham church with its 17th century monument to one of the Henleys ; and Forde House, which is just over the Dorset border. Northward from Chard lies Chaffcombe, a secluded village in whose church Sir Amyas Poulett is buried. When Cardinal Wolsey was at his first living in the village of Limington, near Ilchester, Sir Amyas in his capacity of High Sheriff of Somerset, clapped him into the stocks for drunkenness. When Wolsey became High Chancellor, he took a mean and inexcusable revenge by imprisoning Sir Amyas in the Tower of London for six years. Chaffcombe Woods are the largest and most charming in the district.

Barring
Court.

Market
Cross,
Martock.

In the heart of Somerset.

ILMINSTER.

Ilminster, which lies five miles north of Chard, is set on the banks of the little river Ile, in sight of Castle Neroche. It was once the property of the Abbots of Muchelney and is a place of great antiquity, though almost completely modern in appearance. The nave of the church was rebuilt in 1824 but the remainder of the church is an almost untouched survival from the 15th century, with a glorious tower and some fine monuments. In the north transept is a brass to the founder, Sir William Wadham, and his wife ; a 17th century tomb and brass to Nicholas and Dorothy Wadham, who founded Wadham College, Oxford; and a monument to Humphrey Walrond, who founded the Free Grammar School of Ilminster in 1586. The original building still survives, but is now used as a girls' school.

Within easy reach of Ilminster, is the beautiful Tudor manor-house of Barrington Court, now in the care of the National Trust. It was here that Colonel Strode entertained the Duke of Monmouth in 1680, some years before the rebellion. The lovely setting of charming gardens and gracious mansion, must have been a singularly appropriate background to the beautiful young Duke. There are some interesting tombs in Whitelackington, which lies a mile from Ilminster on the Ilchester road, and there is a magnificent series of monuments and effigies in Dowlish Wake church, chiefly to members of the Speke family, ranging from a woman of the 14th century to a bust of Captain John Speke. This African explorer, who discovered the source of the Nile, accidentally shot himself whilst partridge shooting—a curious end to such an adventurous life.

The chief town between Ilminster and Ilchester is South Petherton, a charming old place with many delightful houses, set in a serenely lovely countryside. The fine church is chiefly Perpendicular, and contains a tomb and brass to that Sir Giles Daubeney who held Calais for England during the 15th century. Chief among the charming mediæval houses, is the noble old mansion known as King

Ine's Palace, though it dates only from the 15th century. King Ine traditionally had one of his many palaces at South Petherton, and the exquisite Daubeney mansion may mark the site. There are many lovely byways round Petherton, two of the most interesting places in the near neighbourhood being Ilton, whose pretty church has several tombs to the Wadhams, and Martock, a pleasant rural town with one of the largest and most impressive churches in the county, dating for the most part from the 15th century, though some of it is of 13th century work. Near the church is a 14th century manor-house, with its stonework in a perfect state of preservation, which is one of the most remarkable buildings of the kind in England. The Grammar School was founded in 1661, and a small moated house is said to occupy the site of a manor-house given to Lord Monteagle as a reward for his discovery of the Gunpowder Plot.

ILCHESTER

Although Ilchester seems uncompromisingly, if pleasantly, modern, it was a place of considerable importance in Roman times, standing where two Roman roads converged on the ancient Fosse Way. In Norman times it was the site of an important fortress, of which nothing now remains. It was for centuries the County town of Somerset, and still has its 13th century Mace in the modern Town Hall. It was not until 1843 that the county gaol was transferred to Taunton, but the ancient gaol has unfortunately been destroyed. Before the passing of the Reform Bill, Ilchester was a Borough, and one of its representatives in Parliament was Richard Brinsley Sheridan. The decline in its importance is due chiefly to the decline of the river on which it is set, as the tide does not now flow above Langport. Ilchester's chief claim to fame in the present day is that it was the birthplace of Roger Bacon, the scientist, who was born there in 1213 and is chiefly remembered for his invention of gunpowder. Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe, the poetess, was also born in the town.

Famous
Somerset
Roads.

Road across
Exmoor at
Landacre Bridge,
Withypool.

Porlock Hill.

Harvesting
in the
Doone Valley.

Ilchester's only antiquity is the small church of St. Mary Major, which has a 13th century arcade and a curious octagonal tower.

In the neighbourhood of Ilchester are Tintinhull, with its beautiful 13th century church and village stocks; Chilthorne Domer, whose church has a square bellcote over its west gable and a fine Jacobean pulpit dated 1634; and Limington, the first living held by Wolsey. Limington church is chiefly interesting for the 14th century chapel founded by Richard de Gyverney, which contains two fine monuments.

SOMERTON.

Northward from Ilchester a road runs to Somerton, which was the capital of Somerset in Saxon times. Its brief dignity ended with its pillage by Ethelbald of Mercia in 733 and by Hubba the Dane in 878, and though it was a walled town with a castle in Norman times, it never regained its ancient importance.

The slight remains of the castle are said to be incorporated in the White Hart Hotel. A fine market cross dating from 1673; a group of picturesque houses; and the handsome church, lend an air of dignity to the little town, which is pleasantly situated on high ground above the River Cary. The earliest part of the church dates from the 13th century, and contains some fine woodwork. Some of the prisoners captured at the Battle of Sedgemoor were temporarily locked in the church and whiled away the monotony of their imprisonment by playing ball. Several of these were discovered in the roof when some repairs were being carried out, and are now among the Sedgemoor relics in the Taunton Museum.

Within easy reach of Somerton are the church of High Ham, which was almost entirely rebuilt in 1476; Low Ham, whose church is an unusual example of a 17th century attempt to imitate the Gothic style of architecture; Long Sutton church, which dates chiefly from 1490 and contains some mediæval woodwork; Kingsdon, whose church contains an ancient effigy of an armed knight; Charlton Mackrell, in

whose church are tombs to several of the Lytes ; and the neighbouring village of Charlton Adam, with its Norman font, 16th century monument, and Jacobean pulpit.

The road between Somerton and Castle Cary runs through Keinton Mandeville, the birthplace of John Henry Brodribb, who is better known by his stage name of Henry Irving. Wheathill, which straggles up to the road at right angles, has a curious little church.

To the reader. . . .

Any reader contemplating a holiday or tour in Somerset requiring particulars as to train services, fares, and other information regarding Great Western Railway facilities is requested to write to the Superintendent of the Line, G.W.R., Paddington Station, London, W.2.

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